N.S.E.
PRICE 20 CENTS
OCTOBER 1922

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

A Great "Wall Street" Story by Garet Garrett

H. Bedford-Jones, Jonathan Brooks
Edward Mott Woolley, J. Frank Davis
Bertram Atkey, M. G. Maury and others

A New "Free Lance" Story by Clarence Herbert New

No More Gray Hair- Says Science

Wonderful, Clean, Colorless Liquid Restores Normal Color —Results in a Week

Secret Sought by Thousands Now Revealed

What is the story your mirror tells? Have you reason to feel that your friends are whispering, "She is showing her age. See how gray she is?" Or are you a man still full of ambition and the ability to win and yet regarded as "too old for active service" because your hair is gray?

But no matter how gray it may be, you can see your hair restored to the color which it had in early years.

A simple preparation as easy to use as water, has been discovered which quickly brings the desired change whether the grayness comes from age, illness, disease, shock, lack of circulation, or any other cause.

Always—Youthful Appearance Wins Admiration

Gray haired—"Too old for active service."

A Tonic to Scalp and Hair

This wonderful treatment comes in the form of a liquid, clean and colorless and known as Kolor-Bak. Simply apply it to hair and scalp as directed and not only will the original color return but your hair will have renewed strength and beauty of texture. It will not appear streaked, faded or dyed—the color will be uniform.

You not only have this uniformity, but you see your hair the actual shade it had in the past. Hair once brown becomes brown once more, once red it becomes red, once black it becomes black, once blonde it becomes blonde. The one clean, colorless solution gives results with any gray hair. No "matching" of color, no sample of hair is required.

The results are amazing. That faded appearance is gone, any brittleness is absent also. Your hair is luxuriant, brilliant, soft, glistening, beautiful as it ever was in youth.

Also Brings Relief for Dandruff, Itching Scalp and Falling Hair

Thousands have found also that Kolor-Bak works wonders in the most presistent cases of dandruff, itching scalp and falling hair. It is not greasy, mussy—it is agreeable to use. Its ingredients are known to be beneficial to hair and scalp.

My Hair Was Quite Gray

"Only a short time ago my hair was quite gray and becoming grayer. It was falling out. My scalp itched and dandruff appeared.

"Only a few applications of Kolor-Bak stopped the itching and dandruff. My hair soon stopped coming out. Most wonderful of all, however, is that my hair is again its original color, I look ten years younger. No wonder I'm so thankful for Kolor-Bak!"

(A typical letter)

The Makers Guarantee It

With every full treatment we send our legal, written, binding agreement and guarantee—which contains the provision that—

—Kolor-Bak will restore your gray hair to its original color, will remove dandruff, stop itching scalp and falling hair—or your money will be returned.

Thousands Tell You

"What do I think of Kolor-Bak? Simply wonderful. No more gray hairs for me and dandruff a thing of the past."

"It restored the natural color to my hair and has cured my little girl of dandruff."

"My hair was perfectly white—now brown as when young."

"My hair began to turn natural color in twelve days."

"Am 60 years old. Hair was white. Now brown as in youth."

"Hair was streaked with white. Now a nice even brown and dandruff all gone."

"My hair was falling out badly. Kolor-Bak has stopped it and put it in fine condition."

From everywhere come words like the above praising this wonderful treatment for the hair.

Special Free Trial Offer

To give you the fairest opportunity to learn by actual experience what Kolor-Bak will do, we are making a special proposition, particulars of which will be sent by mail. No money to send, only the coupon.

No need to send any sample of your hair as the one pure Kolor-Bak solution is for all hair regardless of former color. Mail only the coupon to Hygienic Laboratories, 204 S. Peoria St., Dept. 10348 Chicago, Ill.

HYGIENIC LABORATORIES,
204 S. Peoria St., Dept. 10348 Chicago, Ill.

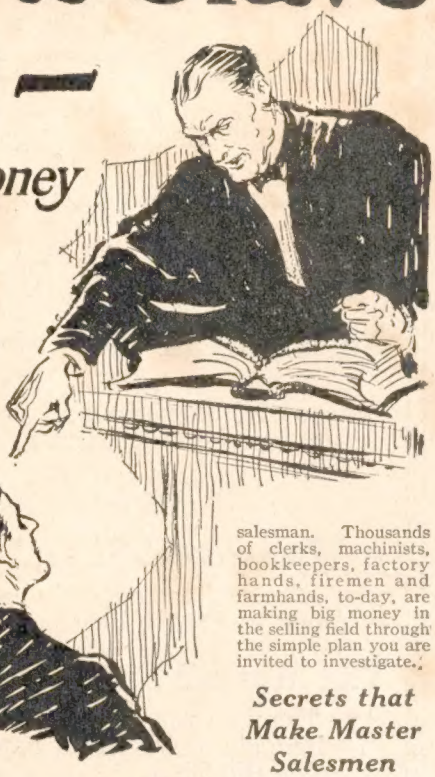
Please send your Free Trial Offer on Kolor-Bak and your Free Book on Treatment of the Hair and Scalp.

Name.....

Address .....

It's a Crime to Slave for Low Pay—

When It's So Easy To Earn Big Money



If You Are Making Small Pay, Then You Ought to Investigate This Simple Plan that Has Shown Thousands a Way to Magnificent Earnings

It is little short of an actual crime for a man to struggle along trying to make ends meet, when he can easily step into a position with better pay and unlimited opportunities for making money.

The sentence for a crime of this kind is "a lifetime of drudgery." Trying to make ends meet is a much harder task than making from three to ten times as much money as you are now making. For you can just as easily take advantage of the experience of countless others who, in one swift stroke, have jumped from small pay in blind-alley jobs to incomes of anywhere from $5,000 to $10,000 a year.

These Men Investigated and—

As an office worker in Detroit, Mr. B. H. Voss slaved away for $125 a month. But he saw his one big opportunity—grasped it—and increased his pay to $500 a month.

As a farmhand, George W. Kearns, of Oklahoma City, grasped the same opportunity. He writes, "Last week I cleared $306, and this week $218." And Mr. Kearns earned $60 a month previously.

Mr. J. L. DeBonis, Chicago, now enjoying magnificent earnings. Before investigating, he was earning $16 a week as a clerk.

When Charles Berry, of Winterset, Ia., decided that it was a crime to slave for low pay, he was earning $18 a week. And then the very first month he earned $1,000.

A whole book could be filled with stories equally amazing of men who have taken this new, quick road to big pay. Nor is there anything exceptional about these men. They were once in the same circumstances that you may be in now. They were discouraged, tired of working for small pay, and disgusted with their prospects. And then, as though by a touch of magic, they were earning salaries that they had never dared hope for.

For they have entered a new field—a field that they had never dreamed of as theirs—one that is not only the most interesting, but the best paying branch of all business—selling.

A Foolish Notion About Salesmen

The average man imagines that, in order to make good in selling, he must be a "born" salesman, Nothing could be further from the truth, There is no such thing as a "born" salesman. Thousands of clerks, machinists, bookkeepers, factory hands, firemen and farmhands, to-day, are making big money in the selling field through the simple plan you are invited to investigate.

Secrets that Make Master Salesmen

No matter what your earnings may be, you can quickly learn the secrets of selling that have put thousands into the big-pay class. For the past fifteen years the National Salesmen's Training Association has successfully trained thousands for the selling field—and through its Free Employment Service helped thousands to secure good selling positions.

And through the National Demonstration Method you gain actual experience in overcoming sales problems of all descriptions while studying in your spare time at home. Then, through the N. S. T. A. System of Electives, you get specific instructions in how to sell the line or lines you want to handle. In other words, the proved selling plans of master salesmen in all lines are laid before you.

Book on "Modern Salesmanship" Free

Without cost or obligation, we will gladly mail you a copy of a very interesting book, "Modern Salesmanship." In addition to many interesting facts about salesmanship, it will also give you full information as to how you can become a highly paid salesman. No matter what you may think now, this book will prove to you that it's a crime to slave for low pay when magnificent earnings are within easy reach. There is no obligation, so just fill in the coupon and mail it to-day.

National Salesmen's Training Association
Dept. 76-R **Chicago, Ill.**

National Salesmen's Training Association,
Dept. 76-R, Chicago, Ill.

Send me FREE your book, "Modern Salesmanship," and proof that I can become a Master Salesman. Also send me list of lines with openings for salesmen.

Name.....

Address.....

Age.....Occupation.....

THE BLUE BOOK

KARL EDWIN HARRIMAN, Editor

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COVER DESIGN: Painted by Laurence Herndon to illustrate "Big Sandy of the Veldt."

A Remarkable Novelette

Big Sandy of the Veldt By Magruder G. Maury 160

A swift-moving story of South Africa—a tale of battle between Boer and Briton, native and white, man and beast. Nor is romance wanting to complete the attractions of this really excellent novelette.

Thirteen Worth-While Short Stories

A Wall Street Sunset By Garet Garrett 1

Here we have a most unusual story of the money kings, by the author of "An Empire Beleaguered" and "Where the Money Grows."

The Murder Specialist By J. Frank Davis 12

The man who wrote "The Hand of Esau" and "The Chinese Label" here gives us a striking story of that picturesque old gun-fighter Captain Bill Titus.

Ike Takes the Reins By Jonathan Brooks 22

Baseball from the manager's point of view is a different game but no less interesting; the author of "Sampson Nails the Flag" has here made it into a specially good story.

Free Lances in Diplomacy By Clarence Herbert New 33

Under the title "The Oriental Embassy Affair," Mr. New contributes one of the most absorbingly interesting stories in this famous series.

Fork-Eye's Flag Still Flies By Meigs O. Frost 45

A thrilling romance of the little known Louisiana South Coast, by the author of "Politics Is Politics" and "The Daughter of Nez Coupe."

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MAGAZINE OCTOBER 1922

DONALD KENNICOTT, Associate Editor

Strategy Hawkins Cruises By Edward Mott Woolley 60

These business stories by Mr. Woolley are attracting much attention. And well they may, for they expound the wisdom of a business expert in a way that makes them valuable indeed.

Wolfssen By M. L. C. Pickthall 68

The brilliant author of "White Magic" and "The Earthquake" has here written a remarkable story of a strange dog in the Northland.

Sand By Rex Vancil Bixby 74

This very much up-to-the-minute story of an airplane holdup and pursuit is exciting indeed. The author has himself been a pilot, and he writes with spirit and conviction.

Devil Mist By George F. Worts 93

That strange country Siam is the highly colored setting for this vivid romance of a young man who heard the East a-callin' all too clearly.

Battle Galore By Jim Tully 100

Here a professional pugilist writes a story of the ring that makes you see and feel just what the fighter himself experiences: a unique contribution by the author of "Emmett Lawler."

Micky Free and Whoo Whoo By Clem Yore 133

The man who wrote "Fair-enough Charley" and "Laughing Johnny Coyne" contributes an exciting story of the West that is wild.

Easy Street Experts By Bertram Atkey 142

In this latest exploit, "The Hide of the Wolf," our amiable adventurers in rascality bring off a dangerous *coup* with conspicuous success.

The Lobster List By George L. Knapp 152

A specially interesting story of young America in conflict with the police department, by the man who wrote "Spud's Probation," "The Prodigal," and many other well-liked BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE successes.

A Thrilling Serial

Lou-Lou By H. Bedford-Jones 108

This picturesque and eventful romance of East and West is the best thing yet written by the author of "Shadows of Saffron," "The Cruise of the Pelican," and other stories you have read with great pleasure.

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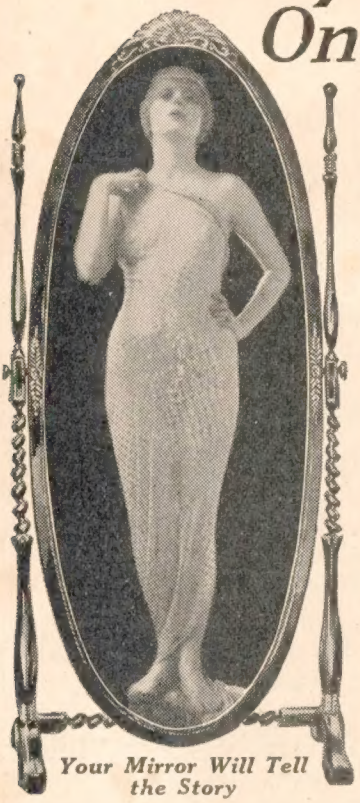
IMPORTANT NOTICE: Do not subscribe for THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE through an agent unknown to you personally, or you may find yourself defrauded. Many complaints are received from people who have paid cash to some swindler, in which event, of course, the subscription never reaches this office.

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE is issued on the first of the month preceding its date (Oct. issue out Sept. 1st), and is for sale by all newsdealers after that time. In the event of failure to obtain copies at news-stands, or on trains, a notification to the Publisher will be appreciated.

Advertising forms close three weeks prior to the time of issue Advertising rates on application.

You Can Weigh Thirty Pounds Less One Month from Today



Your Mirror Will Tell the Story

Amazing new discovery makes it easy to take off a pound or more a day. One woman reduced 13 pounds in 8 days. Another lost 65 pounds in a few weeks and her health was improved a hundred per cent. Still another lost 22 pounds in two weeks. All without tiresome treatments, discomforts or bitter self-denials. Results in 48 hours. 10 days trial.

A WONDERFUL new method of losing disfiguring, burdensome excess flesh has been discovered. A method that can give you the type of figure you admire so much—one month from today—or less. It is a simple, self-followed law of Nature. Any one can apply it at once, without any bitter self-denials, and results are often gained in only 48 hours.

It requires no appliances, medicines, exercise, special baths or massage. There is no distasteful diet to follow.

Lose Flesh Quickly—and Improve Health

This safe, *natural* method of reducing gives you renewed vitality and energy, in addition to restoring your normal youthful figure. Your general health will improve. You obtain a clearer complexion, a brighter eye, a more elastic step, and greater zest in life. Your nerves are improved, your sleep is more refreshing. The years seem to drop away as the superfluous fat vanishes, and you may even find, as others have, that wrinkles which seemed permanent have also been effaced.

When you have arrived at your ideal weight, the new discovery will enable you to maintain it steadily, without gaining or losing. Your weight is thus under your own control.

The Secret Explained

It was given to Eugene Christian, the well-known food specialist, to discover this one safe, certain and easily followed method of regaining normal, healthful weight. He discovered that certain foods, when eaten together, take off weight instead of adding to it. Certain combinations cause fat, others consume fat. There is nothing complicated and nothing hard to understand. It is simply a matter of learning how to combine your food properly, and this is easily done.

These CORRECT combinations, which reduce your weight, are regarded by users as so much more appetizing than WRONG combinations that it seems strange to them that their palates could have been so easily satisfied in the past. You will even be able to eat many delicious dishes which you have denied yourself in the past. For you will be shown how to arrange your meals in such a manner that these delicacies will no longer be fattening.

10 Days Trial—Send No Money

Elated with his discovery and with the new hope and energy it offers to stout men and women, Eugene Christian incorporated this method in the form of simple, easy-to-follow little lessons under the title of "Weight Control—the Basis of Health." This is now offered to you on trial.

Send no money; just put your name and address on the coupon, or send a letter if you prefer. The course will be mailed to you in PLAIN CONTAINER, and $1.97 (plus postage) to the postman will make it yours. Then if you are not fully satisfied in every particular, you may return it within ten days after its receipt, and your money will be immediately refunded.

If more convenient, you may remit with coupon, but this is not necessary.

As soon as the course arrives, weigh yourself. Decide how much weight you wish to lose the first week and each week thereafter. Then try the first lesson. Weigh yourself in two days or so and note the result. You'll be as happily surprised as the thousands of others who have quickly regained a normal, beautiful figure in this simple, scientific way.

Remember, send no money, just mail the coupon or a letter. You are thoroughly protected by our liberal guarantee. Act today, however, to avoid delay, as it is hard for us to keep up with the demand for these lessons. Corrective Eating Society, Inc., Dept. W-5410, 43 West 16th St., New York City.

If you prefer to write a letter, copy wording of coupon in a letter or on a postcard.

CORRECTIVE EATING SOCIETY, Inc.
Dept. W-5410, 43 West 16th St.
New York City

You may send me, IN PLAIN CONTAINER, Eugene Christian's Course, "Weight Control—the Basis of Health," in 8 lessons. I will give the postman only $1.97 (plus postage) in full payment on arrival. If I am not satisfied with it, I have the privilege of returning it to you within ten days after its receipt and you are to return my money.

Name.....
(Please write plainly)

Address.....

City.....State.....

Price outside the United States $2.15 cash with order.

Read What Others Say

Loses 13 Pounds in 8 Days

"Hurrah! I have lost 13 pounds since last Monday and I feel better than I have for months."

MRS. GEO. GUITERMAN,
420 E. 66th St., New York City.

Loses 22 Pounds in 14 Days

"I reduced from 175 pounds to 153 pounds (a reduction of 22 pounds) in two weeks. Before I started I was flabby, heavy and sick. Stomach trouble bothered me all the time. I feel wonderful now."

BEN NADDLE,
102 Fulton St.,
New York City.

Lost 28 Pounds in 30 Days

"I found your instructions easy to follow and your method delightful. In 30 days I lost 28 pounds—8 pounds the very first week. My general health has been greatly benefited."

(Signed) EARL A. KETTEL,
225 W. 39th St.,
New York City.

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE
Vol. 35 OCTOBER 1922 No. 6

A Wall Street Sunset

"Where the Money Grows," "An Empire Beleaguered" and divers short stories have made Mr. Garrett known as a skillful and authoritative writer of very American fact and fiction. This latest story reveals our money kings as very human folk.

By GARET GARRETT

TERRY was putting his newspaper to bed.

"Be at home," he said over his shoulder. "School will be out in a minute."

He was correcting short galley proofs of his leading financial article, written since the close of the stock-market.

Over one proof he lingered, and fearing to make him uneasy with our eyes on his back, we began to browse among the dusty old monetary books that lined the walls. There were two chairs. On one lay several open volumes which Terry evidently had been consulting. The other was a swivel armchair the seat of which had been repaired in a cumulative manner by the simple invention of filling it with old newspapers, which now sloped so that it would be like trying to sit in the lap of a cellar door.

"Make yourselves comfortable," said Terry absently, now beginning to write some new matter to be inserted in his proofs.

"Go ahead," we said. "Don't mind us. We've nothing else to do."

He had asked us very particularly to meet him here about five o'clock. By a whim of chance neither Riggs nor I had ever been in his shop before—in the editorial office of the *Marketplace*. That was the name of his Wall Street paper. We saw each other every day; five days in seven we dined together uptown, and often we lived in each other's rooms; but our official rendezvous, our place of joint being in financial hours, was the private office of J. W. Atchison & Co., on the threshold of J. W.'s lair, where much that took place in the stock-market had its

casualty and where everything that happened produced an instant echo. This was so because J. W. Atchison was who he was—the wisest speculator and the most adroit manipulator of stocks of our time in Wall Street.

AS walking is, you might say it was a step from the door of J. W. Atchison & Co., to the unfamiliar editorial abode of our Terry; but as the fancy runs, it was a journey through miles of years. In New Street, which is the kitchen hall of the financial district, there was still that group of demented brick wall rookeries which mysteriously for so many years survived the sudden advent of modern steel buildings. They were fallen from a great estate. Once they had been mighty habitations, incubating power and circumstance. Now they served chiefly to house mail-order swindlers, bucket-shop gamblers and people with no reputation to mind.

Terry was in one of these buildings. Apparently it doesn't matter where a newspaper is published. The hallways were gas-lighted in daytime. They must always have been dark; the rise of twenty- and thirty-story buildings on every side had made them darker still. The gas-fixtures were of a very old pattern.

"It's like walking back to Black Friday," Riggs said as we were finding our way in.

The men who plotted that famous gold panic had passed this way, in fact. Their images were invisibly photographed on these very walls. The hallway was reminiscent of their voices and footfalls. One had the fancy of physically touching the past. This feeling deepened inside Terry's office, where everything was quaintly old-fashioned.

On the shelves at one side of the room were bound volumes of the *Financial Chronicle* running back to nearly Civil War time. The *Financial Chronicle* is Wall Street's Saturday bible. Terry's paper was a daily.

I noticed Riggs conning the backs of the shelved volumes downward through time.

"What was the famous year of specie-resumption?" he asked suddenly.

" 'Seventy-nine," said Terry, without pausing or looking up.

"I want to see," said Riggs, taking down the *Financial Chronicle* for 1879 and beginning to turn its friable brown pages. We stood together perusing them casually. "I've heard J. W. say," Riggs added, "that people at this time were so pessimistic, or as we say, bearish, that they thought of giving up the Brooklyn Bridge project."

"Impossible!" I said. "Let's see. Try the index."

There it was. The index referred us to a long, solemn editorial on the folly of Brooklyn Bridge. It had been thirteen years building, and only four cables were in place. The estimated cost had risen from three to fifteen millions, and the problem was what to do about it—whether to raise the rest of the money, if that was possible, and go on, or to despair and quit. And suppose it were finished: would it not be a serious obstruction to navigation and a poor substitute for the ferry except perhaps in time of fog and ice?

"With what faltering steps people do progress!" said Riggs, as we stood staring at each other. "Show it to Terry."

JUST then Terry finished his composition. Crashing the last proof on the spike, he turned to face us. We laid the volume open on his desk and pointed to the editorial. He read it with one glance, and smiled politely.

"The psychology of 'seventy-nine is something Wall Street hates to remember," he said. "Can't you find anything to sit on? I want to talk to you. Here!"

He cleared off a space on the end of the table, where two could sit, and pushed Riggs into the chair at his desk.

"You wont think I'm daft, will you?"

"Not at all," we said. "What is it?"

"It may be nothing at all," he began, slightly embarrassed. "You know, I've been in this building ten years. It's low in rent, and out of the way, and suits me perfectly. These were once the high mansions of finance. Perhaps you knew. Well, this is the thing: Shortly after coming here, I began to meet a weird little man, over sixty, I would think, whose looks and bearing affected me sympathetically. He walked with a kind of stiff sprightliness. What he totally expressed was, first loneliness, and then another thing which it will be hard to define. I would call it a feeling of absence. I cannot tell you how extremely absent he seemed. One day I gave him good morning pleasantly. He returned it instantly in kind. But he stopped and stared after me. As I pushed my door open, I looked

down the hallway, and there he stood, still staring, with an intense expression of startled surprise.

"The next time I spoke to him, he took it normally. The third time he seemed used to it. I never saw him in the street but once; and then, though he looked at me, he did not see me. Always in the hallway we spoke, both of us liking it. It was one of those accidental tokens on the highway without which the human business of passing would be drearier than it is."

"Now he's sentimental," said Riggs with kindly derision.

"I never knew his name," said Terry. "And so it is down here, if you've ever happened to think of it. Many of our constant contacts are in fact extremely casual. You may exchange opinions on the market daily for years with a man whom you think you know. One day you meet him elsewhere, and you are both embarrassed and avoiding. You do not know his name, and he does not know yours."

"I can think of several acquaintances like that," said Riggs. "Yes; isn't it funny?"

"I surmised dimly that he kept an office in this building, somewhere above," Terry continued, "but I never thought of placing him, really. His whole existence for me was in the hallway. Now, then—four weeks ago, at about this time, in walks my little man. I hadn't seen him for several weeks. He was wan and tired.

" 'I'd like to leave my keys with you,' he said most graciously.

" 'Are you going away?' I asked.

" 'I'd like to leave my keys with you,' he said again, as if he hadn't heard my question. 'I'll call for them,' he added.

" 'Where is your office?' I asked him.

" 'Right over yours,' he said, pointing at my ceiling.

" 'All right,' I said. 'I'll keep them for you.'

"He didn't thank me in words. He tried to smile, and it was a pathetic failure. His mouth hadn't smiled for so long it had forgotten how. He faltered going out, from weakness, not indecision. I wish now I had followed him. However, I was busy. Besides, I somehow felt it would be an unwelcome attention."

"And you haven't seen him since," said Riggs, anticipating the point.

"And I haven't seen or heard of him since," said Terry. "I feel queer about it. What I thought was that you two might go with me to have a look at his office. We may be able to find out who he is and where he lives. I'd go to see him if I knew."

ALL together, feeling a bit surreptitious, we mounted the brass-treaded stairway to the second floor and came to the office directly over Terry's. On the ground glass of the door there had been a name. Years of cleaning had obliterated all but a few letters. We made out an *A*, then an *I*, and very dimly at the end *S O N*. Terry cast the lock bolt, and we walked in.

The interior was almost dark. Each of us lighted the nearest gas-jet. For a long time we moved about softly, just looking at things.

It was, or had once been, a dignified broker's office, all in ancient taste. Here was the black-walnut furniture again, massive and reminiscently elegant.

There were two rooms.

The first one, which would be called the front office, was spacious. At one side was a black iron grate, and over it a discolored white-marble mantel. To the left of the grate, near the window, was a stock-ticker of a type so old that none of us had ever seen its like. Evidently it had been disconnected by the ticker people and then abandoned where it stood. On the walls were portraits of Jay Gould, Daniel Drew, Commodore Vanderbilt, and other celebrities of a time long since. There were five or six leather chairs, a fine old table, a case of books and three desks—one extra large by the front window in the best light. This was probably where the old man sat. It alone of the three desks bore any evidence of recent human association.

"Notice that," said Riggs, pointing to a calendar on the wall over this desk. What he meant for us to notice was the date. The year was 1879.

Terry led the way to the other room, which would be the back office. Across the whole width of this room was a counter such as bankers once loved, surmounted to a height of about eight feet by opaque glass in which were two windows bearing the legends *"Cashier"* and *"Bookkeeper,"* respectively. At the far end of the counter was a gate which one of Terry's keys fitted. He swung it open, and we saw all the old-fashioned counting-room

equipment—the high desks, the tall stools, ledgers and entry-books lying in neat piles, and a small safe, everything dull gray with dust.

"Look!" said Riggs, calling our attention to the name painted on the safe.

The name was *Phillip Atchison & Co.*

IT appeared also on the backs of the ledgers. One of these we opened. The latest record was of April 17, 1879.

"It pricks me that we may be on delicate ground," said Terry. "Did any of us ever hear of J. W. having kin in Wall Street?"

"Vaguely it comes to me that I once heard of a brother," said Riggs. "Yes, and now that I think of it, I asked Holder. What he said, if he said anything, I don't remember. He may have been putting me off. I wasn't interested enough to notice."

The Holder to whom he referred was Anse Holder, special partner in the firm of J. W. Atchison & Co., and J. W.'s most intimate friend. All of us knew him well; to Riggs he was like a foster father.

"But J. W. Atchison, one of the best-known men in Wall Street, could not possibly have a brother buried alive in this manner," said Terry.

"By your own account of him this Phillip Atchison was an eerie mortal," said Riggs. "Apparently he never talked to anyone. He came and went absently. That sign on the door would have been illegible for maybe twenty years. Then think how little is known of J. W.'s own life. He lives as a hermit."

"It would be very strange," said Terry. "Yet anything is possible. Generations move fast in Wall Street. There have been two since 'seventy-nine."

We thought to look in the telephone-book for the name of Phillip Atchison and presently discovered that there had never been a telephone in the place.

"It's his address I'm looking for," said Terry, as we returned to the big desk in the front office and tried the drawers. All were locked but one. In that one we found an envelope bearing a postmark fifteen years old addressed to Phillip Atchison, Esq., at 7 West Fourteenth Street, New York City.

Terry wrote the address off on a slip of paper.

"Will you go with me?" he asked.

"Dinner first, please," said Riggs. "An hour more or less can't matter."

As our habit was, we went for dinner to the old Windsor Hotel, the night resort of all Wall Street people, and there in the grill-room, sitting alone, was Anse Holder. He asked us to sit with him. We talked shop and gossip and chaff, and suddenly in a casual manner Riggs asked the question:

"What ever became of J. W.'s brother Phillip?"

Holder's power of non-expression was his rarest gift. For some moments he went on eating slowly. Then he said: "The loss of his brother was a grief from which Mr. Atchison never recovered."

When Holder in that particularly arid manner referred to J. W. as Mr. Atchison, it was notice to us that the blinds were down. The limits of that subject had been touched. We were friends to whom many intimacies were permitted; yet there were sudden boundaries. This was one of them.

"But you noticed the evasion," said Riggs afterward. "The loss of a brother does not necessarily mean the death of him. Never did a man use words more sparingly than Holder."

THE sequence of visible Fourteenth Street numbers was broken by several gaps. One gap was where a new building had absorbed some old numbers. Another was where a work of construction was taking place. We kept coming back to the third.

"It can't be here, of course," one or the other of us said vacantly, each time we stopped at the iron fence.

It was a four-square residence in the grand style of old New York, when Fourteenth Street was uptown, all north was villages, and rapid transit was unimaginable. High buildings on either side, coming out to the pavement, caused it to stand in deep, still shadows, remote from the swift and garish excitement of the thoroughfare. Solitary and disdainful, rather to be destroyed than touched by other walls, existing as by right of nobility alone in an utterly ruined environment, it denied the present and sustained the gesture of a splendid past.

"But if this isn't it," said Terry, "then there is no such number." And he opened the gate.

We followed him up the wide brick walk across the lawn. There was no light, no sign of human occupancy whatever, un-

less it was that the doors and windows were not boarded up as is commonly the case with deserted city houses as large and fine as this one.

WE were a silent, sinister group, Terry feeling for something to push or pull, when suddenly the door swung open and the figure of a man appeared. He had been letting himself out, and was so astonished at the sight of us that he was unable to suppress an exclamation. In his hand he carried an electric flash-lamp. He turned it on us.

"What! *You,* Terry?" he said.

"*Doctor* Peters!" said Terry. "How strange! We were trying to find the bell."

"Don't," said the Doctor, closing the door behind him. "Come away with me, all of you."

He pushed us toward the street. His manner was distraught, and his anxiety to get us away was so great that as he followed us down the walk he prodded us with his finger-tips.

"Promise me," he said, closing the gate and turning his back to it, "that you will not enter that house without my consent —not on any account."

"We promise," said Terry. Then he introduced us, saying: "Doctor Peters is one of my very dear friends."

"Perhaps Doctor Peters will be so good as to tell us who lives in that house," said Riggs.

The Doctor looked from one to another of us in dull amazement. If we didn't know who lived in the house, why, then what had we been doing on its threshold?

"It isn't so mysterious as it sounds," said Terry, answering the Doctor's thought. "For a long time I have had an odd sort of acquaintance with an old man named Phillip Atchison who keeps an obscure office over mine in one of the old Wall Street buildings. Several weeks ago he left his keys with me, saying he would call for them. But he never did, and then remembering how ill and strange he looked, I began to worry. This evening I called in these two friends, and together we rummaged his office for an address, which brought us to this house. We couldn't see the number and weren't sure. Besides, the address we found was fifteen years old. If your patient is Phillip Atchison, that's the end of it, so far as we're concerned—unless of course there is something we could do."

The Doctor listened to Terry's explanation with wide-eyed attention.

"It is Phillip Atchison," said the Doctor. "A singular case! I must talk to you about it, for you have something to add to my knowledge. However, that will wait. What I immediately require is a lawyer—a lawyer and two witnesses."

"A certain lawyer?" asked Terry.

"Almost anyone at all," the Doctor answered. "It's mainly to humor the patient and gain time. The trouble is, you see, it's half-past ten, and I must be back in an hour."

"If a corporation lawyer would do," said Terry, indicating me.

"I would think so," said the Doctor, with a vagueness about lawyers. "It's a matter of writing a will."

"And if we might act as witnesses, Mr. Riggs and I?" Terry suggested.

"Most complete!" said the Doctor, with an effort to smile. "Then I may get a bite to eat. Perhaps, too, I should give you an idea of what you are letting yourselves in for."

We sought a place near by. What the Doctor wanted above food was strong coffee. He took it black. Over the second cup he began to talk, more at first to himself than to us.

"To save a man's mind and lose his life," he said, in a tone of soliloquy, predicating nothing, but staring at us as if we knew all about it and were partly to blame.

"Doctor Peters is also a psychologist," said Terry, trying to establish some point of comprehension.

"You get his mind back," said the Doctor, in the same tone and with the same accusing stare, "get it back over a bridge of cobwebs, and then at the very last step, just as you touch reality—oh! The business turns upside down, and life itself swings over the abyss by a thread."

"Was your patient insane?" Riggs asked.

"Whatever you call it," said the Doctor. "My belief is that there is no such thing as insanity where there is no pathology."

"What do you mean by no pathology?" Riggs asked.

"I mean where there is no physical lesion, no organic disease. In that case I hold that what appears to be insanity is not insanity. It is rather an elaborate effort of the unconscious mind to save the body. Phillip Atchison was perfectly

sound physically; yet by all the rules he was insane. He lived a perpetual dream."

"Couldn't you begin at the beginning?" said Terry. "We are nowhere near you."

"I'm coming to the beginning," said the Doctor. "Some years ago I took over the practice of a man who was retiring. We were going over the patients' records. 'Here,' he said, 'is a case that needs only to be watched, and pays very well—Phillip Atchison. Hopelessly insane. Gentle and harmless. Lives all alone with a rickety Irish manservant in the old family house which will be kept for him just as it is until he dies. Goes about as he likes. Goes downtown every business day to an office which, like the house, is kept for him. Everything is done for him without his knowing how or why. He's quite all right in every way, save for the singular delusion that time does not pass. He is mentally asleep. A rare case! I'll introduce you and say you are taking my place. That's all that will be necessary. He will accept you as part of his dream. Once a week you will see him about his health. Just keep his body going right. Your check will come once a month from his brother, a J. W. Atchison, in Wall Street. The brother will call you up occasionally to ask how your patient is. One thing more—this is important: The brothers must not meet. The sane brother knows this, but you must know it too, in case of emergency. The sight of his brother throws your patient into a dangerous frenzy.'

"I fell in love with the little old man at once," the Doctor continued, calling for a third cup of coffee. "He was so quaint and gentle and appreciative! Though past sixty, he was physically perfect. Therefore he challenged my theory. His delusion was that nothing happened and time stood still. All the changes that took place around him were unreal, nonexistent. He thought all the time he was dreaming."

"How long had it been so with him?" Terry asked.

"For more than thirty years," said the Doctor. "A generation had passed before his eyes, and it was all a dream. Now, to my way of thinking, he was not insane at all. The mind had slipped off into unreality for a vital purpose, or, if you please, for the selfish purpose of saving its own abode. By this theory some dreadful thing had once happened to him, something he could not bear the shock of and live; whereupon he said to himself: 'It isn't true. It has not happened. I am only dreaming.' At that instant the mind leaped to the refuge prepared by that thought, and he lived as dreaming thereafter. I was determined to bring his mind back to reality. How this may sometimes be done I needn't explain in detail. There is no formula. You have to find a bridge for the mind to return by. The main difficulty was that he wouldn't talk. Nor would his brother, for I sought him.

"Although I had no clue to what the dreadful thing was that had once happened to him, I never gave up trying to find a bridge. Four weeks ago his manservant called me one evening in haste. His master was very ill, he said. That must have been the evening he left the keys."

"It was just four weeks ago," said Terry.

"He had pneumonia," the Doctor continued. "At his age of course it's quite desperate. However, I pulled him through; and since his convalescence began, I have been spending all my leisure time with him, for the reason that in this state he showed symptoms of becoming humanly communicative. My chance was then if ever. Little by little I began to get faint glimpses of the truant mind. You have to go fumbling in the dark. You never know what will make the contact. A chance word or thought, some accidental association of ideas at just the right instant, and suddenly the passage back is established."

THE Doctor paused. His face was gloomy. "Well, then it happened," he said. "Happened two hours ago."

"You mean you got his right mind back?" asked Terry.

"Yes," he said, and was reluctant to go on.

"What was the idea that did it?" we asked.

"Very odd," said the Doctor, momentarily diverted. "The idea was a red iron wagon. I don't know why. It always seems arbitrary until you have the key."

"A red iron wagon!" we repeated.

"That," said the Doctor. "I was talking to him quite at random as usual, saying anything that came into my thoughts, aiming only to name as many objects as possible. I was telling him of some shop-window displays I had passed on the way

down. In the window of a toy shop I had noticed a lot of little red iron wagons. Instantly I saw that my naming of that absurd and unlikely object had done it. He came awake. I don't mean he opened his eyes. They were open all the time. He came awake to reality with his mind. . . . . My God!"

"What makes it so terrible?" we asked.

"What makes it terrible," said the Doctor, "is—is—well, don't you see? He is sane. The relation of his mind to reality is normal again. He has come out of his dream. But he is awake in the year of about eighteen hundred and seventy-nine."

"Oh!" we murmured, trying to grasp it.

"I watched the struggle in his eyes," said the Doctor, "afraid to move or speak. For several minutes he was bewildered.

" 'Who are you?' he asked.

" 'I'm the doctor,' I said.

" 'Where is Doctor Martin?' he asked.

"Martin was a celebrated physician in New York when I was born. He has been dead twenty-odd years. I take it he was the Atchisons' family doctor.

" 'He's been called away,' I said. 'I am taking his place. You have been very ill, you know.'

" 'Call James, please,' he said to the nurse. 'I want to send a message.'

"James is the old servant.

"At that I faced the calamity. I could not permit James to be called. My patient, now out of his dream, knows of nothing that has happened since his mind slipped away. He thinks it is still eighteen hundred and seventy-nine. He will expect James to be as James was then, whereas that person now is a doddering old ghost. I told him he was not to see anyone just yet. Then I began to take steps against accidents. The nurses are under instructions to answer no questions and admit no one—not even James."

"But his brother," said Terry. "You cannot now keep him from seeing his brother."

"I can," said the Doctor, with professional finality. "You can do anything when a life is in the balance. He asked pathetically to see his brother, but as the shock of suddenly seeing an old man in the guise of his brother might be insupportable, I said his brother had been called out of the city. Then in a very touching way he asked for Anna, whom I never heard of before."

"But what are you going to do?" asked Terry.

"Anything to gain time until he is stronger," said the Doctor. "A day or two without any shock may save him, if only some way can be found to reveal the realities gently."

"How about this business of the lawyer?"

"Oh, that's only to humor him," said the Doctor, looking at the time. "We must be going. . . . . Almost the last thing he remembers is having destroyed his will in a fit of temper, and now he will not rest until he has made another. He asked for three lawyers one after the other. One I never heard of. The other two are dead. As I put him off, he became excited, which was bad, and I was in a sweat until he said any lawyer would do, anyone I could find. That made it possible, you see. There is no risk in his seeing strangers. . . . . Let's be going."

DOCTOR PETERS let us into the house with a key of his own, made a dim light in the reception-hall, and locked the door again from within. There was a strong, not unpleasant odor of dry decadence, as in old secondhand-book shops. There were glimpses of bow-legged chairs and sofas, fat in their middles, with dainty backs and feet; of paintings in shadow-boxes; of onyx and gilt tables; of Turkey carpets and of gas-light chandeliers under clusters of cut-glass pendants.

"Is it not likely that he may recognize me?" Terry asked as we mounted the stairway.

"No," said the Doctor, "not if his mind is still awake."

The old man's bedroom was at the rear of the house, on the second floor. We waited, and the Doctor entered. The hangings everywhere were rich and heavy, and the windows were all double. The stillness of the house made a ringing in the ears.

"Now will you come in, please, gentlemen," said the Doctor, opening the bedroom door wide.

We were presented briefly as a lawyer and two friends who had been found dining together. The old man sat against a pile of pillows in a mahogany bed the posts of which would have touched the ceiling of any modern room. His hands lay folded in his lap; he seemed not fragile exactly, but flickering and instable,

like a candle-flame in a draught. His eyes were keen and clear.

"Bring up chairs, please," he said in a tenuous voice. The nurse was already doing so. "Thank you," said the old man. "I thought the Doctor and James would witness the paper, but you are very kind to come this way, and it will be all right. The matter is simple. You see, I've been very ill—quite out of my head, in fact. The Doctor says I will get well. He knows, of course. Still, I have a strange feeling, a foreboding I cannot define."

HE was silent for some time, looking at us uneasily, and from us to familiar objects in the room, which reassured him.

"My brother is away on urgent business," he resumed, twisting his hands. "It must be very urgent," he added, looking at the Doctor. "He is my only blood kin in the world."

"It is urgent, or he would be here," said the Doctor, laying his hand on the old man's forehead. "We've told him you are out of danger. He is kept informed by telephone."

"By what?" asked the old man quickly.

"Isn't that funny?" said the Doctor freely. "In a scientific paper I've just been reading of an invention by a man named Bell—a means of transmitting oral sounds by wire, called a telephone, and I got that word in place of *telegraph*. I meant by telegraph."

For several minutes the old man lay silent, with a bothered look, as if trying to recover a faint memory. He gave it up and returned abruptly to the business.

"I wish to make a will," he said, "—a very short will, leaving all of my estate to my brother, John W. Atchison, except only my personal belongings, which are to be divided between my brother and my fiancée, Anna Kendricks, agreeably to their desires. That is all. Write it, please, in legal terminology. It seems very informal this way, I know, but I cannot sleep until it's done."

As I reached mechanically for my fountain pen, Doctor Peters gripped me hard on the arm, saying: "The nurse will bring paper and pen and something to write on, or better still, go yourself to the desk over there."

I was at the desk, with my back to the bed, drawing up an improvised legal form, and had not yet begun writing the will when the old man asked:

"What is the date?"

That put us in a tight place. We became four gibbering imbeciles. We could not agree whether it was Wednesday or Thursday, whether it was the fifteenth or sixteenth of a month we did not name, and avoided any mention of the year. Fortunately the impatient testator did not suggest that one of us might easily go and find out. At length it was agreed that we should prepare the document without a date. All of us would swear to the date later.

"That will be all right if it's legal," said the old man. "Tomorrow I hope to have my own lawyer execute a will in a formal manner. This is for tonight."

From there on it was smooth going. The will was an example in brevity. The old man read it carefully, nodding his head, and signed it in a precise manner. When Riggs and Terry had signed as witnesses, he lay back on the pillows with a satisfied sigh.

That seemed to be all; yet the three of us stood there hesitating. We expected a sign from the Doctor to withdraw. But he was watching his patient. Some further impulse was stirring the old man. His hands were troubled and wistful.

"There is no quarrel so bitter as with one we love," he said, not looking at us. "I quarreled with my brother—then tore up my will. It was a will like this one."

The words came one or two at a time, unwillingly. What moved him was not a whim to talk nor the propensity of age to be garrulous; it was an uncontrollable need. During half a lifetime the natural human passion to be heard and understood had been repressed. Now the dam was giving way.

"My brother and I are as thumb and forefinger," he said, "unlike, fixed in opposition, yet indispensable and necessary to each other." He held up his hand to show us how it was. "We were the two only prongs of our tree. We were tutored together, grew together, sinned together and loved together." There he twinkled sweetly. "My father divided his fortune equally between us, and then we took over the business together, as Phillip Atchison & Company. That was the firm name before I had been Phillip Junior. We had never quarreled until this one time. . . . . Do I weary you with this?"

"No, no," we said. "Please go on."

"My brother," he continued, "has a

powerful imagination. He is extremely optimistic. I am perhaps a little too conservative. Together we make an average. Naturally we disagree about some things. We disagree for example about the Brooklyn Bridge. That project, as you know, is going to cost us fifteen millions, perhaps more before it's finished, and I cannot see the value in it. But my brother thinks people will desert the ferries. He wishes to sell our investments in ferry-stocks and put the money into a fantastic scheme of elevated railroads—railroads to run overhead in the streets. As I say, he has a powerful imagination. You can see how we might disagree, can't you?"

He put the question yearningly. We unanimously indicated perfect comprehension.

"Though we never quarreled," he said quickly, "never until this one time. And that was over the mad thing the Government now is doing. The Government's undertaking at this time to resume gold payments is a political adventure. Do you gentlemen understand financial matters?"

"Well—yes, to some extent," said Terry.

"This is the situation," the old man continued. "During the Civil War the Government stopped meeting its obligations in gold and issued a great quantity of paper money on pure credit. Gold of course went at once to a premium. Ever since the war, that is, for seventeen years, there have been two kinds of money—gold money and paper money; and a gold dollar has sometimes been worth two and a half paper dollars. Now, with a great political hurrah, the Government proposes to make gold and paper money equal in value simply by saying it is. This is absurd. The Government has only one hundred and fourteen million dollars of gold. There is in circulation three hundred and forty-six million dollars of that fiat paper money, called greenbacks, issued to carry on the war. Yet the Government undertakes to redeem all this paper money in gold. It is simply gambling on the chance that people will not present the paper money to be redeemed in gold. It thinks all you have to do is to tell the people they can have the gold, and then they wont want it. The best banking opinion in Wall Street is against it. Reason and arithmetic are against it. After the Napoleonic wars the Bank of England tried just this very thing, and failed.

"My brother says it is only a state of mind. If people believe in the credit of the Government, they will think paper money worth its face in gold and will not demand the gold. I tell him it may go for a little while on faith, but then the foreigners will take our gold. We owe Europe hundreds of millions, and if anybody may get gold in this country simply by asking for it, our foreign creditors will ask away all we've got. I'm afraid I worry you. I'm trying to make it clear."

"You do make it clear," we said. "Go on, please."

"On the day the Government opened its windows for the free payment of gold, my brother and I went downtown together as usual. At the corner of Broad and Wall streets we stopped to gaze at a little red iron wagon pulled by one horse trundling away toward the Battery."

AT the mention of the red iron wagon, the four of us exchanged glances. The key was coming.

"That's the wagon," continued the old man, "which for seventeen years has made two trips a day between the Customs House and the Subtreasury, transporting gold from one to the other. The Government made paper money legal tender for everybody else and then would not itself take it in payment of customs duties. These had to be paid in gold. As fast as the duties were paid in gold at the Customs House, the gold was hauled over to the Subtreasury and locked up.

" 'Thank God, we've seen the last of that damned wagon!' my brother said. 'Today the Government will take its own paper money at the Customs House. There is only one style of money now—all good as gold.'

"I must have retorted with some asperity. We quarreled. . . . . We walked in the wake of the rumbling iron wagon—quarreling." His voice faltered. Tears stood in his eyes. "You cannot imagine how black our words were, for brothers. The subject was our disagreement over the resumption of gold payments. Just think! That is what we appeared to be quarreling about. . . . . As it seems to me now—as I've been thinking of it since—there must have been something else in our thoughts. I mean you may quarrel in words of one thing, and all the while be thinking of another thing. Do you understand what I'm trying to say?"

We nodded; he went on:

"I have recently been happier than my brother, much happier than a man deserves to be in this world." He hesitated and looked at us shyly, as if considering whether to say more about his happiness. He didn't. "That same day," he said, returning to the theme, "my brother withdrew from the firm."

As if the painful incidents of that occurrence were passing phantasmally before his mind's sight he closed his eyes, and the whole length of him shivered.

"I'm going on like an old man," he said, looking at us again. "Yet there is something I'm anxious to tell while the memory of it is vivid—a dream, in fact. I must have been taken ill very suddenly. I haven't any notion how long ago, a week or a month. How long, Doctor?"

"I don't know, quite," said the Doctor. "I haven't been with you all the time."

"I don't remember," he continued, "how or when I left my office. But in this dream I speak of I was here and my brother was gone. We have always lived in this house together, and mean to go on that way after my marriage," he put in parenthetically. "Then, as the dream went, James brought me a note addressed in a handwriting which I knew better than my own; and it was very strange to have a note from that person in that way. The reading of it made me extremely miserable. The happiness which had come to me apart from my brother was—was—or no matter what. All of that is immaterial. What follows is the part of the dream I am anxious to tell. It will please my brother.

"I seemed to go on living in this house alone for many years. Although I attended to business every day, I somehow felt that I had no participation in events." He paused a long time. "That part is vague," he said. "The events of themselves, however, are very distinct. First, the Government did succeed with its rash scheme for resuming gold payments, thanks not to its skill or sagacity, nor to faith alone, but to the strangest occurrence you can imagine—a true miracle, in fact. Providence intervened to save the people from the consequences of their Government's stupidity. The crops of Europe failed. It rained incessantly in the Old World as it had not rained since Noah's time. In all the churches of England prayers for fair weather were offered up, and still it rained. When it was not raining, it was freezing. London wore winter overcoats in July; there was summer frost in the wheat-fields. All the time in this country there was perfect weather. We had bounteous crops. Europe had almost none. The result was that we sold an immense surplus of grain and other food to Europe at high prices; gold came pouring in upon us from abroad in a fabulous manner; and all our financial problems were happily solved. This was the beginning of ecstatic prosperity.

"My brother's imagination would have been quite overwhelmed. Hardly had the Brooklyn Bridge been finished before another was wanted, and in time there were four. Fancy! That was nothing. People became so full of haste that with all those bridges to use they were still not satisfied, but drove tunnels under the river for trains to go through. The elevated railroad which my brother talks of was built. Still people could not get about. They kept coming and coming from no one knew where. Tunnels were driven under the streets through the solid rock, and in these tunnels trains were run at terrific speed. In Wall Street buildings thirty stories high went up. Carriages disappeared overnight. In place of them came self-propelling vehicles, the number of which increased so fast that a special department of police was organized to mind them, and it was very dangerous for a pedestrian to cross the streets."

HERE the Doctor interrupted.

"You are exhausting yourself," he said. "The dream is too exciting. Is there much more of it?"

"That is most of it," said the old man. "I wish my brother to hear it. He will be pleased." Regarding us steadily during a little pause, he said again: "I am very anxious for my brother to hear it."

We knew then what he meant. He was as naïve about it as a child saying its "Now I Lay Me."

"We understand," said the Doctor. "But it wont be necessary. These gentlemen must now be going."

"Thank you," said the old man. "Good night."

He wearily closed his eyes.

The Doctor drew us toward the door and was reaching for the knob when suddenly it opened wide—and there was J. W.

He seemed neither to see nor be aware of us. We looked at the Doctor; he made his decision and stood aside. J. W. moved

through us toward the bed, holding his arms out.

"Phillip!" he said in a voice we hardly knew.

Instinctively we averted our eyes. With a tense expression the Doctor listened for the sound of the other voice.

"John!" said the other. And our hearts thumped. The sane gladness of that cry was unmistakable.

The Doctor heaved a great breath as he swept us through the door and closed it behind him. We walked in silence to the foot of the stairway.

"It's all right," he said. "It's all right as it is. Love is a knowing doctor."

"How did it happen?" we asked. "You didn't send for the brother?"

"No," he said. "I shouldn't have dared, and for an instant, in fact, I expected the meeting to be a catastrophe. Nobody sent for him."

"Even when Phillip had pneumonia, J. W. didn't see him?"

"No," said the Doctor. "I've told you that while my patient was in that other state of mind, the sight of his brother threw him into a dangerous frenzy. To allow that to happen for sentimental reasons during a severe illness would be foolhardy."

"Then what brought him here at a certain given moment in thirty-five years? For anything he knew as had yet been told, a meeting at this time was quite as likely as at any other time to affect his brother disastrously."

"Have you an only brother, any of you?"

It happened that none of us had.

"Then of course you don't know," said the Doctor. "I can't explain it; yet I know what it is. . . . . Now I'll let you out quietly. Many thanks. Call me up, Terry, and we'll all have dinner."

IT was one o'clock. We walked over to the Windsor Café to talk.

"Terry, you know things historically," said Riggs. "Was that true as the old man told it about the weather miracle of the year 'seventy-nine that solved the Government's gold problem?"

"Every bit of it," said Terry.

At the Windsor we found Anse Holder alone, and sat down with him.

"If you are waiting up for J. W., he's not likely to return soon," said Riggs.

Holder, I believe, was physically incapable of showing astonishment.

"Why?" he asked.

We told him the whole story. At the end Riggs said: "We've been let into a family tragedy unwittingly, and as we know so much we never meant to find out, we can't help wishing to know one thing more. That is: Who was Anna?"

"She was a very beautiful woman," said Holder. "They had known her from childhood. Both of them loved her. That was the trouble."

"And the note Phillip Atchison thinks he dreamed of—that was a fact too?" asked Riggs.

"She was engaged to Phillip," said Holder, "but she appears to have loved both of them, if that can be, and wavered. At last she wrote Phillip that she loved his brother more."

"Did J. W. marry her then?"

"Mr. Atchison is a bachelor," said Holder distantly. He added: "She died only a few years ago—a maiden lady."

J. W. went on a long journey abroad with his brother Phillip. When they returned, a skyscraper stood where those old New Street rookeries were. J. W. owned the property all the time, having bought it, as we afterward learned, expressly to cloister the office in which his mad brother dreamed.

There was still one point we often discussed. Never could we get another word out of Holder.

"I'm ashamed to say what I'd give to know," said Riggs.

"To know why J. W. never married Anna?" I said.

"Yes—to know which one refused," said Riggs. "It is settled that they loved each other."

"Neither one refused," said Terry. "It never came to them. They were all of eighteen hundred and seventy-nine. Other times, other manners. We have almost forgotten that people ever did chastise their desires. The only way those two could save their love was never to enjoy it."

The Murder Specialist

A tensely interesting story of Texans on the warpath, by the man who wrote "The Hand of Esau," "Harmony and High Water," "A Splash in Society" and many other memorable stories.

By J. Frank Davis

LEW YANTIN came into Summerton on a Saturday morning, two days after having quarreled with Jubal Hay, and moved about town quietly, ostensibly concerned only with small errands of business. Hay, who always came in from his ranch on Saturdays, saw from a store window Yantin pass along Main Street, wearing a coat,—although most visitors from the sticks, that hot day, were coatless,—eyes glancing with veiled alertness from side to side, and was confirmed in his belief, held since their late disagreement, that only his wits or a swift trigger-finger stood between him and a violent end; for Lew Yantin was a great artist in an unusual line. By vocation he was a farmer. By avocation he was a man-killer.

Do not, from this, gather an incorrect picture of Yantin. He was no vulgar murderer, to be outlawed with a price upon his head—no sinister thug, such as is the professional gunman of the great city, pouring leaden death into an ambushed victim and making quick get-away with the aid of equally sinister confederates in a lurking taxicab with camouflaged number-plate. No stealthy assassin, no doer of dark deeds in dark hours, but an actor who performed in the spotlight of brilliant sunshine, before an audience!

At the hand of Lew Yantin death stalked only in the noonday, and with many witnesses. Thus, although five times in less than fifteen years he had shot down his enemy, not once had he been in really serious jeopardy for it. On only one occasion had he been put to trial, and the jury acquitted him that time after having been absent from the courtroom barely long enough to take one ballot and come hurrying back. Men who quarreled with him died, but he killed them only in self-defense. The technique by which he accomplished this was what made him a great artist.

There are some interesting court-decisions as to justifiable homicide in Texas, and he knew them all. Also he had made an intensive study of the mental slant of native juries. When he had killed, and afterward immediately and cheerfully had surrendered to the nearest law-officer, the

district attorney considered the evidence, made little or no objection to the habeas corpus proceedings that promptly released him on bail, and sensibly declined, afterward, to waste the State's money on a trial.

JUBAL HAY believed Yantin intended to kill him at the first convenient opportunity, which would be when first he could maneuver Hay into some position that would give him excuse. Yantin had not told him so; his method was not so direct and old-fashioned as that. If he had, Hay would have had the right, himself on the defensive and with the legal advantage the threat gave him, to shoot it out with him on sight. No, Yantin had not mentioned any course of action whatever when their quarrel ended and he went, black scowling, about his business. But Hay was not deceived. He had said unpleasant things to Yantin, things not easily forgivable, although true; and Yantin had sent men crashing into the hereafter for less.

Hay wished, for the twentieth time in two days, as he stood watching Yantin's progress down the street, that the man had threatened him. Then they could have had it out fairly, and Hay would not have especially feared the outcome. He had been a good shot, and a swift one, in his youth. He had been a Texas Ranger at one time—which statement carries its own commentary on speed and accuracy with firearms. He was much out of practice; but Yantin, for all his record of dead men, was not reputed to be sensationally fast on the draw. At any rate, it would be a fair game, with the stakes to the more skillful. But this waiting on the killer's pleasure, this suspension of action until Yantin could prepare some stratagem, was already jangling Hay's nerves. He resented a delay that could come to only one thing. Uneasily he admitted to himself that in a battle of brains, Yantin would be likely to win. Hay was a brave man, but he was not an especially quick or clever thinker, and he appreciated his limitations.

So now he eased the heavy pistol that hung at his own hip beneath his coat, and frowned after his enemy. Yantin was some years younger than he, and full thirty pounds lighter—a wiry, well-set-up man of only medium stature, looking smaller than he really was, in a land where out-of-doors men run tall and wide. This very unimpressiveness of size, which in some other sections would have handicapped him in physical encounters, had proven advantageous; it furnished to the Texas mind added excuse for self-defense by lethal weapons.

Yantin turned in at the post office, and Jubal Hay stood irresolute, debating whether to avoid him or force a meeting and try to get it over. His frown, then, brightened to a smile of relief, as a battered little automobile came puttering down the street to stop in front of the First National Bank, and its driver climbed briskly out and went into the bank, calling or waving a cheery greeting to no less than a half-dozen acquaintances during his brief journey across the sidewalk.

He was a man in the middle fifties whose face looked his age but whose trim-waisted figure and quick-moving energy belied it—a man of barely medium height and weight, with gray hair, sharp, shrewd, usually twinkling eyes with wrinkles about them born of a million ready smiles, and an intangible air of prosperity and modest authority. Plainly, by the warmth of the salutations that marked his short progress from car to doorway, a popular man in Summerton! In point of fact, he was Summerton's most boasted-of citizen—or perhaps ex-citizen would be more accurate, inasmuch he had long since graduated to wider fields, and was a big-scale oil-operator, bank director and capitalist, with headquarters in San Antonio and important connections in Eastern financial centers, and only incidentally remained a cattleman, with a ranch ten miles outside Summerton, which he visited occasionally over the week-end.

SUMMERTON was justly proud of William T. Titus, commonly called Captain Bill, and informed strangers on little or no provocation that he was the richest ex-Ranger in the State, that his now long-past exploits as a peace officer were so brilliantly unusual even for that famous corps as to be traditions of it, and that he had been for years president of the First National Bank of Summerton and still, for all his concern in really great affairs, continued to be a heavy owner in the institution, and a director.

Jubal Hay went out on to the street, crossed it diagonally to the bank, and found Captain Titus in the president's pri-

vate office at the rear,—the First National not having reached a sufficient up-to-dateness of arrangement to pen its officers in full public view near the entrance,—just lifting his feet to the president's desk and preparing to skim a newspaper. Reese Warland, president of the First National and Titus' closest crony, was out.

" 'Lo, Jube," said Titus, rising to shake hands cordially.

" 'Lo, Bill," said Hay. "Just saw you coming in and thought I'd trail along and say howdy."

The traditional next procedure for old-timers in the Southwest being to get out the makings, roll and ignite cigarettes, they performed that rite with due solemnity. Then Titus asked: "How's things?"

"Only tol'able," admitted Hay. "I thought maybe you could give me some advice. . . . . I've done had a little ruckus with Lew Yantin."

BRIEFLY he sketched the cause of their quarrel, its details, and his conviction that Yantin was out to get him. "He's here in town now," he concluded. "Just went into the post office. He most never comes to town on Saturdays, and I always do. He knows that, natchully."

"You got a gun on?" Bill inquired.

"Shorely. But I caint come a-smokin' if I meet him. He aint give me no warning. He wont. He never does. And if I went to warning him, I'm in wrong afterwards." He added, to make the complications of his problem clearer: "This Frank Chandler, the district attorney, wouldn't be disposed to make any more allowances than he had to. That was a fair-to-middling scrap over the district attorneyship last primary, you know, and I was strong against him."

Bill nodded understanding.

"Yantin is a bad *hombre*," he remarked seriously. "He aint so darn fast, but he's devilish tricky."

"That's it," Hay complained. "It's a good many years since I've had one, but if it was only a matter of a fair gunfight—"

"It wouldn't be—not probably. You remember that time he killed that—feller's name was Kelter, wasn't it? That feller over in San Pedro County—not the last man he got—the one before. I don't recollect just how he did it, but Kelter was a better shot than he was, and a quicker one, and he got him just the same."

"I remember," said Hay, who for two days had been recalling the details of Yantin's homicidal achievements. "He walked up to within arm's-length of Kelter, in the presence of a lot of witnesses, and says, loud: 'I hear you're aimin' to shoot me—in the back.' Kelter says, natchully: 'You're a liar!' Yantin slapped his face with his right hand—no move toward a gun up to that minute—and of course Kelter goes after his pistol. But Yantin, right while he was hitting him, stretched out his left hand, and when Kelter reaches for his gun, gets him by the wrist. There's plenty witnesses then that Kelter is the first man to try to draw. So, still holding his pistol-hand, Yantin pulls his own gun and lets him have it. The whole business takes about two seconds."

"And a dead-open-and-shut case of self-defense," Bill summed up. "Don't let him get within arm's-reach of you, Jube. At that, he isn't likely to try exactly the same play twice. He never has."

"That's the cuss of it!" cried Hay exasperatedly. "You don't know what the pup is going to do."

CAPTAIN TITUS shot a shrewd glance at his friend's face, and sensed the condition of his nerves. He was in just the shape to react to some ingenious trap such as Yantin might set, exactly as Yantin would want him to.

"It is something I've never done myself," he said slowly, "but I'm not sure, if I was you, that I wouldn't go to the authorities and get him put under a peace bond. That would get you on record as believing he was after you."

Bill had rather expected protest, but the promptness with which Hay accepted the suggestion indicated he had already given thought to it and needed only advice to that effect to make him do it.

"I believe that is good medicine," he said. "Frank Chandler hasn't got no love for me, but that wouldn't stand in the way of his doing his duty in a case like this."

"He's probably at the courthouse," Bill said. "I think he gets there not much later than half-past nine, mawnin's."

Relieved in spirit, now that a definite action was before him, Hay came to his feet. "I'm going to see him," he said. "Thanky kindly for talking it over with me." He opened the door into the main room of the bank, and then came back a step, irresolutely. If he had looked out

through the door, he would have observed, standing at one of the gratings, barely ten feet away, a short, swarthy person with the decidedly all-American name of Walter Elder—a name well warranted by his three-quarters of Caucasian blood, although Casimira Zorino, his paternal grandmother, had been a pure Yaqui *pelado*. Hays would not have known that Elder had occasional profitable business dealings with Lew Yantin and hoped to have more, but on general principles he probably would have lowered his voice.

"Look here!" he said to Bill. "It aint good business for me to wear a gun into the courthouse. I haven't got any permit to tote one, and Frank Chandler— First thing he's going to ask, when I tell him Yantin is gunning for me, is whether I'm packing a pistol myself, aint it? And if I say I aint, he'll see the bulge, and maybe get me searched and make me some trouble. There was lots of things said, last election, that he hasn't forgotten. I reckon I'd better leave my gun here with you until after I've seen him."

"I wouldn't," Titus advised. "I'd let it hang right where it is until things lay safer than they are now. Better to take a chance of Chandler making trouble because you've got it, than of Yantin meeting up with you and starting something when you haven't."

"No," Hay said, "this time you're wrong, Bill. You wasn't here much during that campaign last spring. You don't know how nasty it got. Chandler will do his duty about putting Yantin under bonds, and all that, but he'd shore like to get me for something too." He was removing his holster as he spoke. "It wont take me three minutes to get over there, and Yantin is prob'ly still in the post office. If he should be out here and meet me, I can take my coat off, and everybody—him included—will see I aint armed. I'll leave this with you, Bill, till after I get that business done."

"All right," agreed Captain Titus, who seldom repeated unwelcome advice. "I expect I'll be here all the forenoon. If I go anywhere, I'll tell Reese."

HE walked to the street door with Hay. Yantin was not in sight. He watched Hay for a moment as the cattle-man set off in the direction of the courthouse, and then turned back to the president's room and the unread newspaper.

Mr. Walter Elder, of the mixed blood, slipped inconspicuously out of the bank and hurried to the post office, where he found Lew Yantin standing against a wall with his eyes on the door, gossiping with a man who dealt in auto-trucks and tractors. In response to an almost imperceptible lift of Elder's chin, he brought his conversation with the auto-dealer to a close and drifted across the room to the little dark man's side.

At the courthouse Hay completed his errand satisfactorily. The district attorney heard his story with cold but correct official seriousness, and at once bore out his caller's presentiment by asking him if he was going armed himself. Hay promptly demonstrated that he was not, and Chandler, still impersonal and chilly, promised to take the necessary steps immediately to have Yantin placed under bond to keep the peace.

Elated and with a load off his mind, Hay walked rapidly through the courthouse corridor, out to the sidewalk, down to Main Street, now filled with its usual Saturday forenoon crowd, and turned the corner. Immediately he found himself facing Lew Yantin. As Hay saw him, Yantin's eyes narrowed malevolently and his right hand stiffened, fingers bent as though ready to clutch a gun, straight down at his side.

Hay reacted to the sight exactly as he would have reacted back in his Ranger days, purely automatically. He forgot all about his plan to snatch off his coat—the plan that had been constantly in his mind when he was on his way to the courthouse but that he had not thought of since. He forgot that he needed to be on his guard. He even forgot that he was unarmed.

In view of a dozen witnesses whose eyes chanced to be full upon him, he stopped in his tracks, and his right hand snapped back to his thigh for the pistol that wasn't there.

Yantin killed him with the first shot, and added another for adequate measure. It was the agreed opinion of older men among the spectators, as Yantin backed up against a building, loudly announcing that he was prepared to surrender as soon as an officer should arrive, that he had been slower than cold molasses. If Jube Hay hadn't happened not to have a gun on,—and it was common knowledge that he sometimes had,—he would have got Yantin before Yantin even got started.

District Attorney Chandler did not oppose Yantin's release on moderate bail, but he brought the case to trial notwithstanding the improbability of conviction. A considerable public sentiment was behind this. Hay had been moderately popular, and Yantin was not. It was the first daylight killing on a main thoroughfare that Summerton had had for several years, and the citizenry, which liked to assert that the old violent days were long and forever past in that part of Texas, resented the blow to the town's reputation for order. It also may have been in Chandler's mind that Hay's friends, if he did not press for a trial, might remember the political differences between him and the late cattleman and hold it against him in some later campaign.

He really did his best, but the outcome was obvious from the beginning. The evidence was clear and entirely uncontradicted. Yantin and Hay had quarreled. They met suddenly. Yantin stood stock still, his hands at his sides. Hay, an ex-Ranger, reputed to be a quick shot, known to go armed on occasion, made a motion to draw a gun.

Could any reasonable man expect Yantin, under such circumstances, to wait until he had actually drawn it? There were good men and true on the jury who would have well liked, on general principles, to see Yantin punished, but they had made oath to render their verdict according to the law and the evidence. There was nothing to do but find him not guilty.

CAPTAIN TITUS sat that evening of the trial in Reese Warland's parlor, where on nights when he was in Summerton a select coterie of five usually gathered to participate in America's favorite indoor sport. They were waiting for a late-comer, and the conversation, like most conversations in Summerton that evening, was of the court proceedings and their inevitable outcome.

"I'll always believe," declared Warland, "that Yantin made some motion or other that there didn't anybody but Hay see, that made Jube start to draw. And if he did, he knew Jube didn't have a gun on. If they were both armed, Jube could outshoot him, and he knew it, and he has always been a sure-thing fighter, anyway. Yes suh! Nobody'll ever convince me he didn't plan the whole thing out to work just like it did."

"Six killings with the other fellow handicapped one way or another in all of them is no coincidence," Doctor Bannister commented. "There was a time in this country when a committee would have called on Yantin about now and intimated to him that it would be healthy for him to move far away." He sighed. "Being wholly civilized has its disadvantages."

Bill Titus frowned uncomfortably. "I can't help feeling as if I had some responsibility," he fretted. "I couldn't talk him out of leaving off his gun; I advised not leaving it off, and he wouldn't listen. But maybe I ought to have gone over to see Chandler with him, or something. I knew, just like we all did, that Jube wasn't the spryest thinker in the world. Maybe I ought to have been with him, for a witness. But shucks! He said he'd declare himself unarmed if he met Yantin, and I couldn't know he'd plumb lose his head. At that, I cain't get it out of my mind that I'm more or less responsible. I'd like to be a member of that committee you speak of, Doc, and I don't know as I'd mind being a committee of one—if things were like they used to be and the authorities didn't interfere with what happened if the object of the committee's attentions took a notion not to do what he was told."

"You aint responsible; that's nonsense," argued Joe Ansell. "You gave him good advice, and he didn't take it. . . . . I'd like to know who else he told he had left off his pistol."

"He showed Frank Chandler," Warland said, "but there wasn't anybody else in hearing, and Chandler shorely didn't send Yantin word. There wasn't time, anyway. Yantin must have been on his way to lay for Jube there by the corner before ever Jube proved to Chandler he didn't have a gun."

"And Hay went straight from the bank to the courthouse and didn't stop to speak to a soul on the way," Doctor Bannister mused. "Could anybody have heard him, Bill, when he declared himself to you? Could anybody have seen him leave his pistol with you—or overhear him say he was going to?"

"There were two or three customers in the bank," Bill said. He wrinkled his brows in an effort—at least the hundredth since the shooting—to recall who they were. Somebody had passed him, going out, as he turned from the street door to return to Warland's room after seeing

Hay depart. He had a vague impression it was some one he did not especially admire, and the feeling that somewhere in the storage warehouse of his subconsciousness was recollection of who that person was, if only he could drag it out. He shook his head impatiently. "I cain't remember. And that makes it seem all the more as if I was some to blame. If anybody could have proved, today, that Yantin had been told Jube wasn't armed, that verdict would have been different. . . . . Cuss him! I'd like to hitch on a gun myself, and go tell him to move *pronto* out of this county, and never come back."

"And he wouldn't go, and then what?" Ansell asked. "If you did anything to him, next time you saw him, as would be the case in the old days, you'd be arrested, and tried, and maybe convicted; and whether you finally got out of it or not, you'd shore be in one hell-of-a-mess. I agree with Doc that it's a shame, once in a while, we cain't get down to simple principles like we used to, but today is today. Phil Ewing would hate to do it, but you know blame well, Bill, he'd arrest you as quick as he would anybody else if you had to kill a man and it was common knowledge you started the ruckus yourself."

BILL nodded agreement with this. Phil Ewing, chief of police of Summerton, was a member of their own little group of intimates, the member for whom they were now waiting, and it would break his heart to have to prosecute Bill or any other of his friends; but none of them questioned that he would do it if duty demanded. That was the kind of police-chief he was, and they were proud of his reputation and would not have had him otherwise.

"I know it," Bill said. "And Lew Yantin isn't worth one hour in the police station waiting to make a bail-bond, let alone a chance of going to the pen'. But how I hate to have the sneaking coward get away with his killings!"

"Oh, not a coward, is he?" Doctor Bannister protested. "Bad, yes. But a man with as many fights as he has had is hardly a coward."

"All those bad men are cowards—at heart," Bill contended. "That's the principal reason why they're bad. They kill because they're afraid. They're haunted mawnin', noon and night by the fear of death, so they kill their enemies as soon as they can, to get them out of the way and try to get rid of the fear. I know you can give me examples of really bad men that never acted as if they were afraid of anything, but I've always believed that down at the bottom of the heart of every killer is a streak of yellow as wide as your hand."

FOOTSTEPS on the front gallery were followed by the entrance of Chief of Police Ewing. "Sorry to keep you boys waiting," he apologized, "but two or three things came up."

"What has happened to Lew Yantin?" Reese Warland asked. "Left town, I s'pose."

"No," replied Ewing. "And hasn't any intention of leaving, so far as I can see. Why should he? He's as free as air, and nobody with a legal right to say he aint a perfect ornament to our community." The Chief's face showed his disgust. "He's registered at the hotel, and had a regular celebration dinner-party there tonight. Three guests! I didn't know he had that many friends. Herb Jellison, and that crazy young Indian of a Tarnley—that boy will develop into a bad man himself some day if he keeps on with the wild bunch he associates with—and Walter Elder."

"Walter Elder?" Bill repeated.

"Yes," said the Chief, who had removed his coat and was now, with the others, drawing up to the center-table. "He's a friend of Yantin's. They do quite some business together."

"Why did that surprise you?" Ansell asked Bill. "Elder never was much."

"I don't know as I was surprised," Titus said. "I was remembering something." He picked up the fresh deck of cards and riffled them while Warland distributed stacks of chips. "All ready? First Jack. Your deal, Doc. Let's go!"

The game progressed with rather less snap and enthusiasm than customarily marked the gatherings of this quintette, Captain Bill being unusually taciturn, his mind at times seeming to be on a journey to far places. Tactfully all the others except Ewing, who had not been present when Bill expressed his feeling of semi-responsibility for the fate that had befallen Jubal Hay, refrained from the satirical comment that ordinarily they would have showered upon him for his lapses from strict attention.

Bill, meantime, was more depressed than ever. To the feeling that he might have protected Hay was now added the thought that he had possessed a clue that perhaps would have led to the conviction of Yantin, and had not made use of it, or even realized its existence. Common sense told him there would have been small chance that he could have established a connection between Hay's declaration, that Saturday morning, that he was going to the courthouse unarmed, and Yantin's almost immediate errand in that direction which brought them face to face before Hay could possibly retrieve his weapon—at least any connection that could be presented to a jury under rules of evidence. Yet he did not know this. Perhaps it could have been accomplished. And now the trial was over. Yantin had been judicially exonerated. Never again could he be put in jeopardy for the same offense. He was free to go about his business, to quarrel again, to work some trick to get another enemy at a disadvantage, to kill him. Yantin was a menace. He ought to be driven out of the county, out of the State. If only there were some way—

"COME out of the dream and look at those five cards, Bill," said Ewing.

"Pass," Bill told him, finding not a pair.

"Not little Joey," declared Ansell. "She's open for two brown ones."

"And five," remarked Doctor Bannister, pushing them in.

"And ten," added Ewing, with every appearance of being intensely satisfied with the situation. "Everybody that hasn't got at least three of a kind, run."

"I've got just that—big ones," Ansell said complacently, Bill and Warland having "run" in accordance with Ewing's advice. "So I bump it ten more."

"Which is the logical place for queens-up to get ditched," Doctor Bannister declared philosophically. "Go to it, you two four-flushers. I'm sorry you can't both lose."

Ewing saw the raise.

"Wishing any cards?" he inquired, preparing to deal them.

"One," Ansell told him, "spiking" his discard beneath his stack of chips. As they followed the rule that the one opening a pot might split his openers without declaring it, always spiking his discard for proof of what his hand had been, this might or might not mean that he was discarding one of his opening cards in an attempt to fill a flush or straight.

"One also," Ewing announced, and took it.

"What did I say they were?" murmured Bannister. "I'll bet, if I'd hung onto them, my two pairs would have been good."

"Betting, now, one extremely small two-bit white check," Ansell said.

"How much you got in front of you?" Ewing asked. "Twenty-eight dollars flat?" He counted out that amount and shoved it forward. "Tap you."

NOTORIOUS for the enthusiasm with which he played four-flushes before the draw, and the confidence with which he often followed up the play, whether he filled them or not, Ewing's tactics might equally well mean a good hand or a bluff. He was grinning cheerfully into Ansell's face, which meant nothing at all.

"Show 'em to me, you ol' thief," demanded Ansell, propelling his entire capital toward the center.

"Four diamonds," the chief of police confessed. "And a dirty, ornery club."

"Four spades," Ansell replied, grinning even more broadly than Ewing. "And a dirty, ornery diamond."

Ewing brightened appreciably. "Ace high," he said, and faced his cards.

"Double-ace high," exulted Ansell, showing his hand. It contained the ace of spades and the joker—which, according to invariable Texas rules, may be counted either as an ace or as any part of a straight or flush. "That's what I opened on. A pair of aces."

He gathered in the pot.

"Good work!" chuckled Warland. "Poor ol' Phil Ewing, Summerton's leading four-flush artist! That's the way to beat a specialist, Joe. Tie into him according to his own game."

"I've got it!" Bill exclaimed, with sudden inspiration.

"What?" demanded Ewing, with assumed peevishness, as the banker replenished his depleted stack of chips. "Not the right to chortle over good players, the way you've had to buy about six times. You don't seem to be acquainted with even the rudiments of the game. What's the matter with you tonight, Bill? Indigestion or something?"

"Mental dyspepsia," Bill told him

equably. "I've got my thoughts digested now. Joe showed me how—and Reese."

EWING looked about the circle and nodded solemnly. "Stark, raving mad!" he declared. "The only thing to do in a case like that is take some more of his money away before he recovers."

"Go to it!" Bill challenged him. "You cain't. Now that you fellers have told me how to handle what was bothering me, I'm going to play cards."

"What was bothering you?"

Bill smiled. "It's a secret—especially from you. You'll admire to hear it when I get ready to tell you. That might be tomorrow evenin'—or it might be sooner. If I told you now, you'd get all flustered."

"A common treatment," Doctor Bannister told the table in his most professional manner, "is alternate hot and cold baths. The condition advances quite a bit farther before a straight-jacket is indicated."

"Come on!" Bill cried briskly. "Cease aimless conversation and get busy. I've got to win a lot of money back before twelve o'clock."

Which he proceeded to do. Only once or twice during the remainder of the evening did he relapse, even briefly, into absent-mindedness. With the exception of one detail, his problem had been solved.

He entered the First National Bank the following morning when the doors had been open less than five minutes. Warland viewed his appearance with some surprise. "I thought you were going to San 'Ntonio early," he said.

"Changed my mind. Little matter of business got to be attended to. If I get it finished, I'll probably get away on the evenin' train." Titus had a traveling bag with him which he put in a closet over beside the vault, a disposition of it that Warland afterward recalled as unusual, there being no reason why he shouldn't set it on the floor in a corner of the president's room. Then he proceeded to loaf, quite obviously killing time.

It was after ten o'clock when he observed the stocky figure and swarthy face of Walter Elder coming through the bank entrance. He stepped into Warland's room. A moment or two later, standing at the grating a few feet from the open door, Elder heard him say to Warland:

"I hear Lew Yantin's still in town. I wonder if he's packing a pistol."

"Not likely," Warland said. "Wouldn't be very good sense just at this stage of the game."

"I aint so sure about that. Police might jump him for carrying it, if they found it out, but between two evils I reckon getting caught without it might be the worse. Some of Jube Hay's friends aint feeling especially good-natured about his hanging around here after he got turned loose. If he aint prepared to take care of himself, he might find himself digging dirt with his vest pocket."

"Small loss if he did," the bank president commented. "A lot you or me should worry."

"Me!" cried Bill. "I don't care if he gets so filled up with lead that they'd sell the remains for old metal. I was only wondering whether he was taking a chance or playing safe."

TWO minutes later, stepping out into the main room of the bank, Captain Titus found Elder gone. He reached the door in time to see the man hurrying down the street. Idly he followed. Elder turned in at the hotel.

Bill's eyes twinkled grimly. The defect in the plan that had suddenly come to him the preceding evening had been that Yantin, so soon after having been put on trial for homicide, would be unlikely to go armed, in which case the plan would be unworkable. He returned to the bank, confident that when the killer left the hotel, he would be wearing a pistol.

Warland was still handling the morning's mail in his little office. Captain Bill passed his door, went to the closet where he had left his bag, took from it his own pistol and holster, and adjusted them, without the act being observed. He strolled down the street and visited a friend whose window commanded a view, at a distance of less than a block, of the hotel entrance. When Yantin came out, shortly before noon, Bill went to meet him, timing the encounter so it would occur by the corner, where a score of Summerton citizens were within sight and hearing.

He stepped in front of Yantin, so that the man had to come to an abrupt stop, and faced him not two feet distant, hurling without preliminary of greeting a harsh, staccato question:

"Am I in that list of men you're going to murder as soon as the excitement over this last one dies down?"

Yantin was taken completely by sur-

prise. He had noted Captain Titus' approach, but in view of what Titus had said in the bank and the way he had said it,—Walter Elder having reported the conversation in careful detail,—he had not included the ex-Ranger among the men against whom he might have to be on his guard. He was entirely familiar with the Captain's reputation, and had no relish for trouble with him. The form of the question was confusing. He started to answer it "No," and was quick-witted enough to realize this would not do. It was imperative to deny the charge, without hesitation, and his choice of words, as Bill had hoped, was highly unfortunate.

"That's a lie!" he cried.

TO the passing pedestrians, especially those who had not heard the question, it was apparent that Yantin was calling Bill Titus a liar. Instinctively most of them slipped into doorways and up against building-walls, where they would be witnesses of whatever might happen but not within probable range.

The old-timers among them expected Bill to step back and reach for a weapon. Surprisingly, he stepped in closer to Yantin, and his right hand went forward in a blow. But it was a most unusual blow—neither a punch to hurt nor a slap in the face to insult. Wide open, the hand traveled straight up, and the palm landed hard under Yantin's nostrils. Men versed in the art of rough-and-tumble encounter appreciate the value of such a blow, which little boys have been known, most descriptively, to call "a snooter." It is intensely painful, and induces an immediate and embarrassing activity of the tear-ducts.

Yantin, blinking damply, reached desperately for his pistol, only to find Bill's sinewy fingers closed on his right wrist. Then, with a sickening jolt, Bill's gun came jabbing into his solar plexus, the trigger already pressed, the hammer raised and ready to fall merely by the relaxation of the Captain's thumb.

Yantin looked into the glistening teeth of sudden death and was afraid. His face whitened. Sweat stood in beads on his temples and at the sides of his upper lip. He thrust his left hand into the air and gasped: "Don't shoot! For God's sake!"

"Why not?" snarled Bill, his face not a foot from Yantin's. "You went after your gun first. I got the advantage—just like you got the advantage of that man Kelter that you killed over in San Pedro. Exactly the same, isn't it? You slapped him, and he went after his pistol, and you grabbed his hand and drew. Did you give him a show 'for God's sake,' or did you kill him like a dog? There isn't anything standing between you and hell but my thumb, Yantin, and it's getting nervous and shaky."

YANTIN'S eyes rolled white, and convulsively he swallowed and licked his lips. Then his brain, for the first few seconds paralyzed by terror, began to work again with something of its accustomed shrewdness. He saw a loophole.

"If you shoot me now, it isn't self-defense!" he cried. "You've got my gun-hand and I've got the other one up. I'd have them both up if you didn't have hold of me. You couldn't call it self-defense. It wouldn't go. There's a court decision about it."

"Strong on court decisions, aint you?" Bill sneered. "Do all your murdering according to 'em. I'm going to let go of your right hand now. Put it up with the other."

It shot above his head with almost comical celerity, but the color began to return to the man's face. He was saved.

"Yantin," said Bill, so each word could be heard by every one of the breathless spectators, who by now numbered close to a hundred, "you are a dirty murderer, and a mangy whelp, and a sneaking, tallow-hearted coward. You're a four-flushing skate that has been able to get away with it because nobody has ever taken the trouble to call you. From the top of your head to the soles of your feet you're plumb yellow. I'm going to prove it to everybody in sight, right now."

He paused, while the audience waited, tense.

"Anybody can call a man names when he's got the drop on him. I'm going to throw away the handicap, and give you one. I'm going to put up my gun, and stand back, and lift my hands up into the air just like you've got yours up. There's a name the courts have decided is justification for gun-play in Texas; so if anybody calls you it, and you kill him, you'll probably get let off like you usually do. After we get set, equal, I'm going to say it, slow and distinct, so neither you nor anybody else will make any mistake as to what I'm calling you. I don't like the

language, and I don't make any practice of using it, and when I say it I don't mean any reflection on your family, because I don't know anything about your family one way or the other, or want to. But it means all the rough things a man could think of bunched together, and it's the best fighting talk there is. The man that wont resent it is a yellow quitter. After I've said it, I'm going to let you start after your gun before I make the slightest move to go after mine—and kill you like a flat-headed rattlesnake, if I'm able, in self-defense."

BILL leaped back, dropping his pistol into its holster, threw his own hands above his head, and spat out the epithet.

Nothing happened. Yantin's face reddened; his features contorted, and his fingers twitched, but he did not lower his hands the smallest fraction of an inch. A long five seconds passed. Then:

"If it's uncomfortable, standing thataway with your hands up," Bill said contemptuously, "you might ask some one of these gentlemen to take your pistol and hand it over to the police for safe-keeping, and I reckon we could call this little incident about closed."

Yantin's eyes were venomous, but after a moment's wait he said, his voice low and shaky: "I'd thank one of you gentlemen to take my pistol."

A bystander, shamefaced at being present to witness such humiliation, stepped forward and relieved him of it, running a hand deftly over his body to see that he had no other weapons.

"Now you can put 'em down and go about your business," Captain Titus told him, his own arms falling to his sides. In silence, eyes averted, Yantin turned to move away.

"Wait!" Bill commanded. "There's something I want you to remember, Yantin. I haven't got any right to tell you where you can live and where you cain't live. If you want to stay in this county and come and go in this city, that's your privilege. But we've got your number, here. As long as you live, you'll never move about in this neck o' the woods that everybody wont be pointing at you behind your back—pointing at you and whispering. 'That's Lew Yantin, the killer,' they'll be saying. 'Everybody thought he was plumb bad. He killed six men in gunfights, all according to law, so he couldn't be punished for it, although it just happened he had a little the advantage over the other man in every fight. And one day an old feller told him he was a mangy whelp and a yellow coward, and rumpled him in the nose, and called him the meanest fighting name there is, and gave him the handicap of letting him go after his pistol first, if he wanted to—and he took it lying down.' If you like to know that that is what everybody is saying about you,—forever,—you will stay in this county. . . . . That's all, Yantin."

As the nearer witnesses silently made room for him, the killer moved slowly in the direction of the hotel. When he was clear of the crowd, he lifted one hand to his nose, and then, discovering that teardrops still stood on his cheekbones, furtively brushed them away. He shuffled, with neck bent, and did not look back or to either side.

Elbowing hastily through the mass of men came Phil Ewing.

"What's this all about?" he demanded.

"I've been tying into a specialist according to his specialty," said Bill mildly.

Ewing looked suspiciously at Titus.

"I heard there was gun-play," he said. The citizen with Yantin's pistol stepped forward and passed it to him. "Did you hold Yantin up and take it off him?" he inquired of Bill accusingly.

"Mr. Yantin especially asked to be relieved of it, Chief," the man who had handed over the gun put in, before Bill could reply. "Cap'n Titus was talking to him some, but the Cap'n didn't have no pistol in his hand, and his hands weren't even anywhere near where they could pull one." A murmur of endorsement of this statement came from the spectators, and Ewing, whatever he may have wondered, asked for no further details at the moment.

"I shore come a-runnin'," he said, for Bill's ears alone, as they turned away, "when I heard trouble was starting between you two. Cain't stand for it—not right here in the heart of town. How come? Was it bad trouble?"

"Not very," Bill assured him. "On the contrary, I reckon it wouldn't be stretching the truth to call it good trouble. This county, if I aint mistaken, is going to lose one of her most undesirable citizens. I always believed he was a four-flusher." He grinned at the Chief significantly. "And mine," he said, "was double-ace high."

Ike Takes the Reins

A baseball story that is clever and "different," by the author of "Cutting Back," "Simple Minds" and many other popular stories.

By Jonathan Brooks

"YOU'RE always yellin' 'Wolf, Wolf!'" complained Jake Daly. "But I notice it's always bull. Every year yuh let out a yell bein' hard up, and needin' a job; but every fall I see yuh buy another farm. Some day the mortgages will eat up these here farms of yours, and you'll come around hollerin' your head off for help, and you wont get as much as a bat-boy's job."

"Jake, I reckon I could carry bats—" began his friend Alibi Ike Thompson, old-time catcher, in a tone of reproof.

"All y'ever did with 'em!" laughed Jake. "But listen, Ike: what makes yuh think yuh wanta manage the Blues?"

"Well, I need the money I could make outa the job—"

"Yeah, like the Babe needs a livelier ball," Jake scoffed.

"And besides, I think I'm the only man in the United States that can get that ball-club outa last place."

A microscope might have detected an added flush of modesty under the brick-red hide of the old catcher. But the naked eye could clearly have seen the red of angry resentment when, in the middle of Ike's sentence, Jake broke into a loud laugh.

"What's the big idea?" Ike demanded hotly. "I don't see where *you* get off to yell at that, after what I've done for yuh."

"'At's right, Ike, dead right," Jake explained. "I was just wonderin' if yuh think you're the guy that invented the elevator. How else could yuh get that club outa the cellar?"

"That'll be my job, if I get it," retorted Ike.

"Listen, Ike," said Jake. "Let 'at job go, and stick here with me this year. I can put yuh on a good sal'ry. Them Blues have been in the cellar so long they'll fall down if they get out—like a horse that's been in a dark stall too long. Why, their whole town sings the 'Eighth Place Blues' from April to October every year. They've finished last five times in a row, and they've had eight guys try to get 'em out. It's hopeless."

BUT Alibi Ike was stubborn. He had played ball for two decades, and acted as right-hand man, prime minister and scout for Jake Daly, of the Royals, for several years. He knew he was getting old, too old for active participation in the national game, and he wanted a chance to capitalize on the baseball he knew but could no longer play. His sole remaining ambition was to land an opportunity as a club-manager in fast company. The tail-end Blues constituted his only chance, so far as he could learn.

"None of the managers of these other clubs can be pried off their job," he argued to Jake. "It's my best and only bet, Jake. See if yuh can't do sumpin for me, wont yuh?"

"Ike, they've only got one pitcher, and he's had a sore arm two years. They haven't got a catcher or a third baseman that can throw the ball past the pitcher to save his life. And this woman that owns the club, why, she's awful."

"How d'yuh mean?"

"Runs the club like a tea-room—all purty and fancy, but nothing substantial about it."

"Aw, listen, Jake," Ike pleaded. "Go on and see what yuh can do for me. I need the job, and I want the chance. It'll mebbe be the last one I'll ever have. I know it's a hard job, but if I make good on it, why, I'm all set. If I don't, I'm no worse off'n I am now, anyway."

Jake Daly scoffed, ridiculed, argued sincerely and finally pleaded with Ike to give up the idea of running the club; but the old catcher, former star for the Royals when Daly himself was a youngster just breaking into the game, was obdurate. Jake finally agreed to see what he could do toward landing the place for Henry as pilot of the eighth-place Blues. Because of Ike's long and well-known association with his own club, Daly deemed it wise to be circumspect in his efforts. Therefore he talked with a baseball writer who traveled with the Royals, who wrote a long and enthusiastic letter to a sporting editor of the Blues' town, who in turn saw Mrs. Dora Wendle, the club owner. After much negotiation the thing was accomplished.

"Ninth Manager in Five Years Takes Reins," was the way the Blue papers headlined the story of Alibi Ike Thompson's signing. Every sport-writer in town waggishly lined up these managers in retrospect and wagered, regardless of their age, color and spavined condition, to back them as a club against the regular Blue line-up.

Ike carried the papers to Jake Daly, whom he stopped to visit before leaving to assume the management of the Blues.

"Yeah, and you'll need to take up the whip, too," said Jake,—"unless Mrs. Wendle decides she'll still hold on to it. Ike, I'm glad, if yuh really want this job; but it's gonna be terrible. The way I figure, the Blues are the best club that ever got south of sixth place, but they're all messed up. They lose games they've no license to lose, every day."

"More winned against than winnin', hey?" Ike muttered. "Well, Jake, I may not give yuh a run for the pennant this year, but yuh want to watch us, anyhow. I'll bet yuh four dollars and eight cents to a lopsided ball that we don't finish last."

IKE reported directly to Hot Springs, where the Blues went for spring training. All preliminaries had been handled by the Blues' secretary, Tobe Simpson, under direction of Mrs. Wendle herself. Ike would have preferred some more remote camp, to avoid the society atmosphere, but said nothing. He was a diplomat, after his own fashion, and had resolved to insist on his own way in nothing except essentials. Mrs. Wendle might order pretty blue uniforms trimmed in cream, if she liked, and she did. She might have the boys put up at the very best hotels, and she might even go so far as to add to their pay-envelopes in order that they might always put up a well-dressed appearance off the field. Such things, Ike reckoned, were her prerogatives as owner of the club. But he reserved the right to handle the club on the field, without interference, and to initiate all deals for players and complete them on his own authority.

There was professional pride in this resolve, as well as a selfish desire to promote his own prosperity. Ike had signed his contract with the stipulation that he was to handle the club for one year, with a bonus for finishing as high as seventh place, and double salary if he landed in sixth place or better with the Blues. He had his eye on that bonus, and his hopes on the doubled salary.

He was not long sizing up the team. They were a miscellaneous assortment of old, young and middle-aged ball-players,

good and bad as to ability, and indifferent as to ambition. Five years in the cellar ruins anything but grapes, and they don't stay there that long any more. The old-timers were misfits, generally, but there were two rays of hope among the rookies.

"The regulars are not so much," he explained to Mrs. Dora Wendle, going over the prospects on Sunday afternoon six days after opening camp at the Springs. "But we've got two ball-players among the kids."

"Oh, only two, in all that lot? Why there must be fifteen of them," complained Mrs. Wendle somewhat querulously. "The scouts said they'd all burn up the league."

"*Only* two?" Ike retorted. "Why, Mrs. Wendle, that's about four times as many as most big-league clubs find in the spring workouts."

"But the scouts said—"

"Yeah, I know what they said," Ike interrupted. "They've got to go through the motions of earnin' their money."

IKE studied Mrs. Wendle as they talked. She was a strikingly pretty, if slightly overdressed, young widow of not more than thirty years. Coal-black hair and brows, a somewhat rosy complexion set off by even white teeth and sparkling black eyes, made Ike wonder how she had remained a widow as long as the two years since old Sam Wendle died. "Don't see how these guys could play ball at all, with her around," Ike muttered to himself, during a lull in the conversation.

"What's that, Mr. Thompson?" she asked sharply.

"Why, uh, I was just sayin' we've got some ball-players, at that. One of these boys, Leary, is a third baseman," said Ike. "He's built like Ownie Bush, and throws like Ownie did when he broke in. Whips 'at ball around like a cork out of a pop-gun."

"But isn't he the one Mr. Williams said fumbles so many grounders?"

Artie Williams was the club's first baseman. Ike, frowning, wondered why Williams should be talking about the players to Mrs. Wendle.

"Well, he doesn't pick 'em as clean as he will," Ike replied. "But say, he could stuff the ball in his pocket, pull it out again and still get it to the first baseman ahead of most the runners in this league. And this other boy, Lafe Jones, is a pitcher. Big, tall, awkward kid, but he could throw a ball right through the grandstand if the catcher would get out of the way. Speed? Mmmmm!"

"We've got a fine outfield, don't you think, Mr. Thompson?" she asked, ignoring his praise of Leary and Jones.

"They'd oughta be good, the workouts they've had the last coupla years without any pitchin'," Ike agreed grudgingly. "And they *are* good, at that."

That wound up the conference. Next day Ike set the boys down to work in earnest. He shunted the old third baseman to the second team and installed Leary at the hot corner for the regulars. Williams, field captain for the time being by virtue of having held the position the year before, complained about the shift.

"What's the idea droppin' Joe and usin' the kid?" he asked with an air of abused authority.

"So's yuh wont have to wait until the next inning for the ball when it's hit down to third," Ike said flatly. "Oh, Leary, come here," he called. When the boy approached the pair, at the bench, Ike determined to put Williams in his place for all time, if possible. "Leary, the captain, here, and I've been talkin'. We've decided to put yuh on third for keeps. See? If you'll bust in, now, and don't get swelled on yourself, but keep on workin' as well as yuh have, the job's yours. Get me?"

"Yes sir, I getcha," snapped Leary.

"Smart kid," muttered Williams, sulking.

"Thatsa boy! Go to it," said Ike.

LEARY went into things with a spirit that soon woke up the rest of the infield, which displayed signs of life for the first time in years. He whipped the ball around the lot with so much zip that the other infielders, Williams included, had to speed up in sheer self-defense. In a week he had his place cinched beyond dispute and was heading the newly revised batting-order.

"That's that," said Ike to himself. With a watchful eye on the boy, he turned his attention to the battery men, where his experience would do the most good. He put in a great deal of time with young Lafayette Jones, and he saw to it that the regular staff of pitchers took their training-work seriously. Beyond this, convinced that mechanical weakness was not the club's greatest fault, Ike gave his thought to that intangible, much misunderstood and much maligned factor, morale.

Baseball fans reading this chronicle in expectation of a strong ninth-inning climax in which a home run by the star hitter follows two dozen strike-outs by the star pitcher, to win a game which means the pennant, will be sadly disappointed. A strong finish is, with no thought of the pun, the end. The fan is entitled to his stirring, happy end, but the manager is concerned always with the means. He gets his climaxes constantly. His crises come thick and fast through every game.

With the single exception of the third-base situation, Ike's crises saved themselves until the club was back at home, and won the city series from a strong team in the other league, and settled down into the long one-hundred-and-fifty-four-game grind. Because the Blues did win the city series, against a club that had finished third the preceding year in its own league, the fans turned out *en masse* for the opening of the regular schedule.

"Can these Blues be the goods this year?" the fans asked themselves. Ike might have chilled enthusiasm and expectancy somewhat had he called attention to the cold weather with which the opponents in the city series had been afflicted throughout the training season. But he kept silence. Mrs. Wendle was all wrought up over fondly cherished pennant hopes. Club attendants and hangers-on showed more spirit than in years, and the team promised well—before the schedule was cracked open.

"We've a chance this year—on the law of averages," exclaimed Tobe Simpson excitedly. "We're due to win a pennant. There are eight clubs in this league, which has awarded thirty-two pennants,—that would be four to the club. We've only won one, so—"

"Yeah, on the average, eight clubs win the flag every April," said Ike, dryly. "But an average of only one a year wins it in October. The law of averages aint got as much to do with baseball as the National Commission and the law of battin' eyes."

SPORTING writers heralded the opening of the season with hope. Then the Blues lost four games in a row, running true to form established across five years.

"Alibi Ike Thompson has the league by the tail-ender," they wrote, and Ike's troubles began.

"I thought things were starting out a little too smooth," he said to himself. "Glad we lost these four, for I can see where my work is cut out."

By the end of the second week, when the club had won three games out of twelve, Ike had his plans laid. He found himself with a good fielding, throwing and hitting outfield, fair catching, weak pitching, a coming star at third base, and an average pair of keystone men around second. His best ball-player, he knew, was Artie Williams, on first base. Williams was the leading hitter, by far the most finished fielder, and perhaps the smartest ball-player of the lot. He played with a mechanical perfection and grace that were beautiful to see. But Ike felt his club's weakness centered in Williams, without being able to explain why. One inkling came in a game early the third week of the season.

"Why didn't yuh play for that bird goin' to third, after takin' 'at bunt" he asked Williams at the end of an inning.

"Didn't know whether the kid could handle it," replied Williams carelessly.

"That's not your worry," snapped Ike. "Fr'm now on, you shoot, see? And let the guy on the other end worry. I don't wanta see any more of this standin' round holdin' the ball with men runnin' the bases."

"But how could I know Leary—" began Williams, with an air of injured innocence. Ike cut him short.

"Throw it, and find out."

Williams sulked, but said nothing more. He played the string out that afternoon, but next day precipitated another crisis. He was at bat with men on first and second, and nobody down. Ike signaled him to sacrifice the pair along. Williams figured, with nobody gone and the opposition thus far scoreless, the Blues might as well keep on swinging to try for several runs. Therefore he merely made a half-hearted feint at bunting on the first strike. Ike piled out of the dugout and caught the attention of the umpire behind the plate.

"Smith to hit for Williams," he said shortly. Williams turned about and flushed an angry red as Ike wigwagged him to the bench.

"Playin' for one run wont get us anywhere," grumbled the first baseman as he flopped down on the bench.

"Mebbe not, but playin' accordin' to signals might," Ike retorted. "Next time yuh cross up a signal on me, I'm gonna plaster a fine on yuh. Remember that, will yuh?"

THE incident caused a small storm. The fans booed the luckless Smith, who popped up to the pitcher, and then turned to razz Ike. Sport-writers took up the cudgels for Williams, deploring the move Ike had made to humiliate the star hitter openly.

"Y'oughtn't to have done that, Ike," said Tobe Simpson confidentially. "Art's been with us four years, has a grand hittin' average of .317 and fieldin' average of .972. Fans like him, too."

"Yeah?" asked Ike. "Well, he's gonna make an average right now of playin' to orders for one whole year regardless of all his other averages, see?"

Mrs. Wendle, too, spoke of the incident, regretting the necessity for public rebuke of Mr. Williams, perhaps the club's most valuable player, and one whom she personally admired very much.

"But Mrs. Wendle—" Ike began.

"Oh, I know I should not interfere," agreed Mrs. Wendle readily. "I sha'n't. But it does seem, as owner of the club, I might have at least this one wish respected."

"Our contract says—" But Mrs. Wendle again headed him off.

"Why, certainly it does. You're to have absolute control of the team on the field. But Mr. Thompson,"—and she paused to smile one of her blandishing smiles,—"can't you run it to please me, just that much?"

Ike stumbled out of the club office in a daze. He resented this interference, but could see no method of preventing it. He had met many club-owners of many kinds, but never one with such a smile as that worn by Mrs. Wendle when she had a point to gain. While he was worrying over his best course, his troubles dissolved of themselves. At least, so it seemed for ten days. Williams behaved himself, played to orders, hit well in the clean-up, and the club broke even in ten games. "Too much prosperity," thought Ike. "Sumpin's gonna break."

WILLIAMS did not appear at the park on a Monday morning for forenoon practice. Neither did Lagrange Jenkins, the shortstop, nor Charley Hawkins, second baseman. When Jenkins and Hawkins appeared for the game in the afternoon, Ike questioned them separately. They told the same story. Mrs. Wendle had a party at her house on Sunday evening, after the game, and neither Jenkins nor Hawkins had felt like getting up in time for morning workouts.

"All right, boys; snap into it this afternoon," said Ike. "It'll cost yuh just fifty bones apiece."

Both boys grinned rather foolishly, accepted their punishment with fairly good grace and let it go at that. Williams came on the field just as the Blues wound up fielding practice, took a drink of water by the bench, and started for first base, where Smith, the second-string catcher, was lumbering about. When he had reached the bag, Ike, who was hitting grounders to the infield, called off the fielding practice and waved the boys to the bench. He waited by the plate as Williams came shuffling back.

"What's the matter, Williams?" he asked innocently enough. "Sick?"

"Wha-hunh? Oh, yes, been feelin' rotten. Sick last night," complained Williams.

"Jenk and Hawkins, there, with yuh, hey?"

"Why yes, they were, till after midnight," said Williams, wondering as he spoke whether he had fallen into a trap. An instant later he knew he had.

"We'll, it costs yuh a hundred, and ten days off without pay," Ike snapped.

"Mrs. Wendle wont stand for that—" began Williams.

"I sh'ld think she'd like it," Ike retorted. "Now she can have ten parties for yuh, and yuh can stay up as late as yuh like. But listen: be back on the job here the morning of the eleventh day, or the same fine goes again, see?"

"I'm gonna see Mrs. Wendle," Williams said doggedly.

"Take the afternoon off to do it," suggested Ike.

Tobe Simpson came excitedly down to the bench during the third inning.

"Mrs. Wendle will be sore when she finds out about this," he said. "She's against finin' the boys. Why, last year we collected only an average of four dollars in fines, to the player."

"Lay off them averages, Tobe," said Ike. "We'll collect an average of four players to the fine if it's necessary to make these birds play ball."

"But she'll hand it to you for plasterin' Art," Tobe warned. "Art says he was at a party at her house last night."

"Tobe, you tell her I'm gonna fine her if she don't let my athaletes alone."

"But she's outa town, to be gone till Wednesday," said Tobe seriously. "I'd have to write her a letter."

"Write it," said Ike.

THAT night, thinking things over, Ike decided to drop the defensive and go out on the attack. "Might's well be hung for a sheep's a lamb," he thought. Instead of going to bed early, as was his habit, he went downtown to the hotel where the Sharks, in the city for a four-game series, were staying. There he hunted up George Taylor, manager of the Sharks. They sat up together for two hours dickering and bickering; and before they parted, they routed out a notary public, dictated some roughly worded terms and signed duplicate agreements.

Next afternoon Sox Burtt, lately of the Sharks, lined up at first base for the Blues, and a left-handed recruit pitcher named Dymon, already nicknamed "Rough," also lately of the Sharks, was out warming up with the Blue hurlers.

"Who's 'at guy?" demanded Williams, reporting late, but in uniform, to Ike.

"Our new first baseman, Soxy Burtt," said Ike shortly. "Traded yuh last night for him and a pitcher. George Taylor thinks he's got a chance at the pennant, and he wanted a good seasoned first-sacker. That's you."

"But I never asked to be traded," Williams complained.

"No, and yuh never asked to have the signals changed when yuh didn't like 'em," Ike retorted. "Yuh changed 'em to suit y'rself. And yuh never asked to lay off fr'm practice, either."

"I'm not goin' to the Sharks," Williams announced sullenly.

"Suit y'rself," said Ike. "George Taylor's no guy to monkey with. He'll blacklist yuh in a minute if yuh don't report. I told him to look for yuh this afternoon, see?"

"Wait'll I see Mrs. Wendle!" exclaimed Williams in defiance.

IKE had a run of luck that afternoon. The afternoon newspaper baseball writers hurried detailed accounts of the trade, with lurid descriptions of the differences between Ike and Williams, to the baseball extras. These would have aroused feeling against the old catcher were it not for the fact that Burtt, a lanky left-handed throwing and hitting fellow, cut on the same pattern with Wally Pipp, got hold of the ball twice for long three-baggers. Not only that, but with his club going into the ninth inning and a two-run lead visibly melting, Ike took a chance on the new left-hander. Dymon set the Sharks down runless, and held the game for the Blues.

The morning papers, disposed to create a rumpus in behalf of Artie Williams, could not raise vigorous objection to the two new men in the face of their work. Fans displayed little interest beyond the hope that the newcomers would add a little strength to the club. Tobe Simpson predicted dire happenings when Mrs. Wendle learned of the deal.

"He's not the fielder Williams is, and not the finished hitter," Ike agreed. "But he's comin', and Artie's goin'. And besides, he's married. Wont be chasin' around to any of Mrs. Wendle's parties, all hours of the night."

"But Mrs. Wendle says we make too many trades, anyhow," said Tobe, a slightly built fellow who always wore his collars too large and carried a pencil over his ear. He took down the pencil and started figuring. "Why, we've averaged five trades a year for four years, and—"

"Now look at us!" Ike concluded, for him. "It's up to us to trade ourselves outa this mess, some way."

TOBE'S warnings, Ike's forebodings and Williams' threats of dire things all proved vain. Mrs. Wendle returned next day, and aside from the usual ripple occasioned by her comings and goings at the office of the club, there were no signs of a storm. Williams decided discretion was the better part of working for a living, and left town with the Sharks. He left no word, made no effort to communicate with Mrs. Wendle, and in general conducted himself like a crawfish.

"But nothing was said to me of any trade, Mr. Thompson," Mrs. Wendle complained. "I think we've made too many trades. The men hardly have a chance to get acquainted. They come and go as fast as a five-reel thriller, always on the run."

"It's the only trade I've made, ma'am," said Ike righteously. "And I think it's improved the club."

"But I was rather fond of Mr. Williams," she said. "He was good company."

"Yes ma'am," Ike rejoined. "He said he was going to talk to you about the deal. Said you'd not like it."

"And then left without waiting to see me," mused Mrs. Wendle. "Oh, well,"—this airily, with indifference,—"perhaps it is just as well."

It was just as well, or even better. Ike put in extra hours with his infield, speeding up the lanky first baseman to work smoothly with Leary, Jenkins and Hawkins. He taught the rookie left-hander, Dymon, to shorten his wind-up and quit jerking his head before snapping the ball to the bases. The Blues went on the road for a stretch of eighteen games, and electrified the league by winning eleven of them. They were starting a series with Jake Daly and his Royals, midway on the trip.

"In last place, I see, Ike," Jake Daly greeted his old-time catcher and coach.

"Yeah, but we're a *good* last, Jake," rejoined Ike. "We're still in the league, and aimin' to climb."

"Four dollars to one yuh don't climb any around here," laughed Jake.

"Take yuh for ten dollars worth of that," snapped Ike.

THE BLUES turned in then, and with good pitching by Dymon and Lafayette Jones, smart fielding by Leary and long and lofty hitting by the gangly first baseman Burtt, all molded together by smart stage-management on the part of Ike, took the Royals three times in four. The last day of the series they climbed into seventh place. Ike collected from Jake, amid much raillery, and devoted the forty to throwing a beefsteak-party for all his athletes.

Thus stimulated, the Blues held grimly to seventh place for the remainder of the road-trip. They were hailed as conquering heroes when they returned home to stay two weeks. Their first game at home, on a Friday, was a winner. So was the second, on Saturday. On Sunday the biggest crowd that had gathered in the Blue park for seven years thronged the stands to aid and abet the triumphant upward march of the once lowly Blues. They saw a rattling good ball-game, but the Blues lost it in the tenth when the opposing team bunched three hits. Ike got quite a friendly hand throughout the contest for the improved play of the Blues, and the crowd took the defeat good-naturedly.

But on Monday the Blues lost again. Tuesday the story was the same. Wednesday morning, in the workout, Ike called Jenkins, the shortstop, and second baseman Charlie Hawkins together.

"Boys," he said, "yuh'll have to get together out there around second. We lost 'at Sunday game because four men stayed on the bases 'at had no business stayin' there. Monday, yuh lost out on two double plays yuh should of had. Tuesday yuh didn't seem to be speakin' t' each other. Whatsa trouble, hey?"

Jenkins and Hawkins looked at each other, but said nothing.

"Off each other, or what?"

"Aw, nothing much, I guess," said Hawkins. "I'm a little off my feed, I think. Don't feel right. Slowed me up, maybe."

"I'll put in a sub, then," said Ike.

"No, don't do that. I'm all right."

THAT afternoon Hawkins was good, but Jenkins fell down on some easy plays. If Ike thought his trouble ended when Artie Williams departed with the Sharks, he was mistaken. The Williams difficulty was child's-play compared to his keystone problem. Your winning baseball team must have a shortstop and second baseman with but a single thought—to kill two birds on one batted ball whenever and wherever possible. They must be so close as to make the Siamese twins look like distant relations. If they differ on so small a point as the number of lumps in their coffee, the life of the club manager is unlikely to run smooth.

After having become a comparatively easy-running combination, Jenkins and Hawkins began giving imitations of a pair of Kilkenney cats, in a purely technical baseball sense, of course. When Jenkins was on the bag with a runner tearing from first, Hawkins would force him off the sack or in front of the runner with a wild toss—or, which was worse, he would let him have the ball a little late, after fielding an easy grounder, so that Jenkins had to hurry his throw to get his man at first. Jenkins, in turn, developed a habit of neglecting to cover the bag on agreements, making Hawkins look bad. They quit talking things up to each other, and forgot all about holding the runner to the bag by bluffs to take throws.

Ike at first thought they might be sulking or quitting in order to get themselves traded to other clubs. But he learned that both were high-grade boys individually. Jenkins was studying medicine, and Hawkins had almost finished a course of training as an architect.

"It aint as if one of 'em was slow and the other one fast," Ike reflected. "I could slow up one of 'em, or speed up the other, if that was it. They team all right when they wanta."

Plugging along in last place with a team that shapes up fairly well is worse than trailing with an out-and-out bunch of misfits. In the latter case a manager may resign himself to his fate. But the Blues were not a bad ball-club, and Ike knew it. He had hope for them, and he had his professional pride. Moreover there was that bonus for seventh place, and the doubled stipend for sixth. Finally, Old Alibi Ike Thompson, catcher in eighteen leagues and master of them all, was not the type to let his job whip him.

At the end of ten days, firmly ensconced in the cellar again, Ike decided once more to take the dilemma by the horns. He wired every club manager in the league seeking a trade for a second baseman. Everybody had a second baseman. Failing that, Ike once more made soundings, this time on the point of a shortstop. Again no luck.

"Everybody's got second basemen, and nobody will give up a shortstop," he complained. "And I haint anybody I can use on either job, regular."

THEY went away for a road trip involving three series. Hawkins and Jenkins refused to bunk together, as they had on the first trip, but their play around second improved slightly. The club braced up sufficiently to win half its games, which is fast traveling for ball-players with a season record of only one-third of their games won. Back home again, however, to take on every club in the league in rotation, it was the same old story.

But on the third day Ike saw the light. He had dressed hurriedly after the loss of another game, and was standing at the curbstone outside the ball-park when he saw Mrs. Wendle drive away with Lagrange Jenkins sitting in the car with her. He went back into the clubhouse and found Hawkins sitting half-dressed, taking his own sulky time about getting his clothes on. Ike tiptoed softly out. Next day, after lunch, he posted himself in the club office at a window where he could watch his Blues arrive from downtown to report for play. Presently Mrs. Wendle's high-priced sport roadster came purring down the street and stopped at the curbing. It stood quite awhile before anybody dismounted, and then not Jenkins, but Charlie Hawkins got out.

"Oh ho!" said Ike to himself. "That gives us something to work on."

Wrapped in abstraction, old Alibi Ike sat through the afternoon's beating. He noticed that today it was Jenkins playing off-color, but aside from that one thing, appeared to see nothing that was going on. He left a pitcher in the box too long, with the result the score was one-sided. His management of the club was mechanical, even lackadaisical, a criminal behavior for an old ball-hawk like Alibi Ike Thompson.

After the game, with the germ of an idea in his mind, Ike stopped at the club office to look over the mail.

"Both 'em guys jealous," he reflected. "Green eyes are not battin' eyes. Wanted, a cure for jealousy. Think I'll ask Mrs. Wendle to give 'em both the gate."

"WHY, Mr. Thompson, that's ridiculous," protested Mrs. Wendle, her bright eyes flashing in scorn as her bright teeth flashed in a sarcastic smile. "To think my talking with these boys could have anything to do with their playing. It's absurd!"

"But Mrs. Wendle," Ike pleaded, "don't yuh see, ma'am, they're not workin' right? And they was, awhile back. We want this club to do well. It's not a bad club. We can get outa last place—"

"Oh, bother last place, Mr. Thompson. I really don't care where the Blues finish. I think I'll sell the club, anyhow."

"Yuh couldn't give it away, ma'am, unless it got outa the cellar."

"Oh, well, that's your job," Mrs. Wendle stifled a yawn. "Go ahead and dig it out. That's what you're paid for, isn't it? And you mustn't come running to me with such nonsense. It's insulting, really."

"All right, old lady," said Ike, but this to himself, after he had shuffled away from Mrs. Wendle's old-rose and mahogany office. "Just for that, you'll pay me that bonus. I'll lift this bum ball-club to sixth place if I have to beat these two guys to a whisper."

FAILING in his plea with Mrs. Wendle, as he had half expected to do, Ike turned back to his germ of an idea. If there was one thing he ought to be able to do, thought Ike, it was to cure jealousy. Fight fire with some more fire, was the

layout. He cast about for a handful of fire, and found it in the mail.

"Oh, Tobe," he asked of Simpson, the figuring fool. "Wasn't Martin Sanders with this club, some years back?"

"Sanders, the pitcher? Yeah," said Tobe. "Good, big, upstandin' felluh—college athalete, and all that. Yeah! Smart pitcher, too. In thirty games he worked for us, six years ago, he won nineteen, and averaged only two and one-twelfth runs to the game. Averaged six and a half strike-outs, and only two passes. Averaged—"

"F'rget it, Tobe. Average a hundred per cent, now, on this question, and tell me why he left the club."

"Why, we traded him."

"Sure, but what for?"

"Needed a ketcher, as I remember it."

"Come clean, Tobe. Why'd they trade *him?*"

"Oh, I see," said Tobe. "Well, Martin was a fine-lookin' big kid, then, just outa college, or university, or something, and old Mr. Sam Wendle kinda thought he was sorta takin' a shine to Mrs. Wendle. Not that I ever thought he was, y'understand. Martin's square."

"I see," said Ike, deep in thought.

"Why?" asked Tobe.

"Oh, nothing, except I see that old Wadsworth Smith of the Jaybirds is askin' for waivers on Sanders. Guess we'll just claim him at the waiver price, and see if we can get him."

"Good idea," exclaimed Tobe. "I don't believe he's through."

"I should worry if he's through," muttured Ike.

"What's 'at?" demanded Tobe.

"I mean," Ike explained. "That I should worry whether yuh think he's through. If I hadn't thought he'd be useful, I'd not have said we'd claim him. Put through the claim, will yuh, Tobe?"

STILL missing on two cylinders of the eight in the regular line-up, the Blues limped for a week until Martin Sanders arrived. They won two games during that time and held their percentage practically stationary around the .330 mark. Ike marked time with Hawkins and Jenkins and said nothing to the keystone pair, whose play continued indifferent. Without making any especial effort, Ike noted that they continued their attentions to Mrs. Wendle, alternating in her favor as escorts. He counted heavily on Martin Sanders.

"Married, Sanders?" he asked after greeting the new pitcher.

"I'll tell the world I'm not," Sanders replied. He proved to be all that Tobe Simpson had said of him—a big, upstanding, nicely built fellow with broad shoulders and a long reach. His hands, as Ike remarked after shaking with him, were good. "Why? Are you one of these managers who wants his men to settle down, marry and raise a family on nothing a year?"

"No, oh, no," Ike hastened to assure him. "I'm no relation to Wadsworth Smith."

They joined in a laugh at the well-known impecunious policy of the Jaybirds' club-owner.

"I was just askin', because Mrs. Wendle inquired about yuh when I told her we'd claimed yuh," Ike explained. "She said she thought y'd do great work for us."

"Reckon I ought to win some games, if I can get in shape and these Blues will give me a run or so to work on," said Sanders.

"Well, take your time," suggested Ike. "No hurry. But say, yuh might look in on Mrs. Wendle. I know she'll be glad to see yuh. Pitchin' can come afterward."

"What the hell!" Sanders exploded. "Did you hire me to pitch ball, or to hang around after her? What's the big idea?"

"Aw, now, listen—" Ike began, only to be interrupted by the thoroughly angry Sanders.

"Dammit, Thompson, I've a notion to knock your old block off," exclaimed Sanders, reddening. "That's not only a dirty insult to me, but it's mighty disrespectful to a lady, I'm telling you."

"Aw, gwan—I'll beat yuh to a whisper if yuh start anything with me," growled Ike. He could not find a basis for honest resentment of the younger man's attitude, however, for he felt rather guilty in the course he was following.

"And you an old man, hey?" smiled Sanders, relaxing. "Tell me, what's the game? Am I to pitch, or play the society rôle? Speak up, quick. If you want a pitcher, I'm hired. If not, I'm on my way."

"Ca'm down, ca'm down," Ike implored, fearing his strategy was back-firing. "Of course I want yuh to pitch, and pitch your head off. Lord knows we need a pitcher, or three. I thought mebbe you'd not want to work for a day or so, and meantime yuh could look up Mrs. Wendle. But if y'd

rather work 's afternoon, why, yuh can hop to it."

THERE is no denying that, for one of his years, baseball experience and general sagacity, old Alibi Ike, catcher and manager, did a crude job of it as far as directing Martin Sanders was concerned. His technique was rough, and his spirit perhaps overzealous. But he accomplished the thing he had started out to accomplish. Martin Sanders was thinking of Mrs. Wendle.

For that matter, she must have been thinking at the same time of Martin Sanders, for she arrived at the ball-park earlier than usual that afternoon. Neither Hawkins nor Jenkins came with her. Ike, remembering the old saw about the new baseball broom, used Sanders in the game. He felt the newcomer would do his best to clinch his job, and he had at the same time an idea that Sanders would do his utmost to appear well before Mrs. Wendle.

Hawkins and Jenkins put up a very ragged game around second; but Sanders, working hard, pitched himself out of three holes into which they projected him, and won his game. Six hits were all he allowed, and he marked up nine strike-outs. His work was good, even inspired. At the end of the seventh inning he stopped at the railing in front of Mrs. Wendle's box to chat with her a moment. Everybody in the park saw them, including the umpires, who chased him to the bench.

Jenkins saw it, and in the first half of the eighth threw a ball over Sox Burtt's head into the grandstand. Hawkins saw it, and kicked a grounder across the diamond almost to third base. They were up in the air; but Sanders, grinning confidently, added two strike-outs to his list, and thus saved the meager lead the Blues had achieved.

"Say, Jenk," said Ike to his shortstop, after the game, in the clubhouse, "hurry up an' get your clothes on. Wantcha to go downtown with me."

"Sorry, Ike," said Jenkins. "Gotta date. Can't tonight."

"All right," Ike replied. "Some other time."

He addressed the same request to Hawkins, who complied. With an eye on Sanders, Ike timed his departure. When he and Hawkins reached the curbstone in front of the club office to wait for a car, Jenkins was already there. The three of them stood and watched Mrs. Wendle drive away with Martin Sanders. Jenkins, crestfallen, joined Henry and Hawkins for the street-car ride downtown. Nothing was said of the incident, but Ike chuckled wickedly to himself for an hour.

NEXT day Jenkins and Hawkins both came to the park on the street-car, and Mrs. Wendle drove up, bringing Sanders in her roadster. They were a happy-looking pair. Martin asked Ike for the day off, in consideration of having pitched and won the day before. Ike was glad to grant the request, and gladder still to see Martin sitting with Mrs. Wendle in her box throughout the game. Jenkins and Hawkins, on the field, were terrible. Hawkins, insanely jealous of his .267 batting average, took his sullen attitude to the plate with him and batted like a pouting schoolboy.

" 'Bout time to stop this stuff now," thought Ike. "When 'at guy begins layin' down at the plate, sumpin's gonna break."

They worried through the game, and lost it. The next day, with Jenkins and Hawkins in open mutiny, and playing still worse baseball, the Blues dropped another game. On the fourth day came the climax. Ike elected to pitch Martin Sanders again, to try for an even break on the series. In the first inning the visitors' lead-off man rolled a topping bounder down to Hawkins, who cuffed it to one side and then looked to Jenkins, as if expecting the shortstop to back him up. The second man up hit a grasser straight at Jenkins, who had a double play in his hands. Jenk took the ball casually, turned toward second and then, with all the time in the world, deliberately tossed the ball over Hawkins' head. Sox Burtt retrieved it, and held the runners on third and second.

"Gimme the ball," yelled Sanders. Burtt threw it to him, and Martin shot it to the catcher, standing on the plate. "Come here, you guys!" Sanders motioned to the infield. Leary ran over to join him back of the box, and Burtt ambled across. Jenkins shuffled slowly up from the short-field, and Hawkins sullenly dragged his feet into conference. "Listen," pronounced Sanders when he had the four around him: "This guy Leary, here, works all the time. And so does this long-legged Burtt on first. And so do I, see? But you two guys down there around second work

together like a pair of strange tomcats. See? Get together, will you?"

He glared first at Hawkins, and then at the shortstop.

"Don't see where you get off, except with the ladies," retorted Hawkins sullenly.

"Yeah, lady-fusser!" grunted Jenkins.

"Oh, so that's it, hey?" asked Sanders. "Let me tell you something: This stuff's none of your business, see? My personal affair, and Mrs. Wendle's. Get me? But listen, I don't take her money without working for it. And when I'm trying to earn it, there's no guy on *this* club going to lay down on me. See? Is that plain?"

The two infielders merely grunted. Ike decided it was time for him to take a hand, and he shuffled hurriedly out to the diamond. He arrived just in time to hear Sanders take a parting shot.

"You two guys go on back there and play the game up to the handle, or I'll break every damn' bone in both your heads."

HAWKINS and Jenkins kicked all the clods on their way back to position. Ike, repressing a broad grin, took his way back to the bench and sat down. Leary threw out the next man at first, meanwhile holding a runner on third. Sanders whiffed one for the second out, and then Burtt wound up the inning by taking a grounder deep in his territory and beating the runner to the bag. The rest of the game, Hawkins and Jenkins played fairly respectable ball.

That evening as Sanders, avoiding the railliery of his teammates on winning his second straight game, to say nothing of several motor-rides, hurried out of the clubhouse, Ike called to him:

"What's your hurry, Mart?"

"Got a date, Ike," Sanders replied over his shoulder.

Ike turned to look at Hawkins and Jenkins, but they pretended to be busy. Next day, however, he caught them dead to rights. They were on the bench when Sanders sat down with Mrs. Wendle in her box. Ike saw them watching Sanders, with envious eyes, and he diverted their attention. Both were startled when they found him studying them, and both flushed deeply.

Alibi Ike Thompson, ancient catcher, merely grinned with only the smallest hint of mingled malice and reproof.

As Ike looked from one to the other, they turned and gazed into each other's eyes. Ike furnishing the cue, they broke into slow, foolish grins of their own.

"Gwan out there and play ball, now," growled Ike good-naturedly, "or I'll beat yuh both to a whisper."

"FROM then on," Ike explained to Jake Daly at the end of the season, "we played a right smart game. No catchin' to speak of, and no pitchin' outside what Sanders gave us, with some help from Jones and Dymon. But with this and that, and some nice work around second base by them guys, we just about broke even on the rest of the schedule. Bugs in that town couldn't do enough for us, either. Went crazy, they did. We drew better crowds than the other league team did, and it was up to fourth place all the way."

"Yeah, but did Mrs. Wendle come through?" asked Jake.

"When we came here to wind up the season with yuh," said Ike, "we had seventh place cinched, and she'd already paid me the bonus."

"Yeah?"

"But winnin' three outa four from yuh put us in sixth place by three points. So she took my origin'l sal'ry, added the bonus, and then doubled the whole mess. Purty nice, I claim."

"I'll tell the baseball world it was," Daly agreed. "Y'oughta buy two farms this fall, Ike, 'stead of one. But say, now, women are not so bad, if yuh know how to handle 'em, hey?"

"Y'r not talkin' to me," said Ike, disconsolate.

"Whatsa matter? Didn't yuh handle 'er?"

"Handle 'er?" echoed Ike querulously. "Handle 'er, hell! She's married Mart Sanders. He's gonna run the club, and I'm out of a job."

"A Strong Man — His Strength," a remarkable football story by Jonathan Brooks, will be an interesting item in the forthcoming November issue of THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE. You will find it distinctly worth reading.

Free Lances in Diplomacy

"The Oriental Embassy Affair" is one of the most strikingly unusual and dramatic stories yet published in what is acknowledged to be the longest-sustained and most interesting story-series on record.

By Clarence Herbert New

VISCOUNT ITOYORI cannot be called exactly "the man of the hour" in Japan because he is too completely the man in the background. But he has more of a hand in shaping the present foreign policy of Nippon than anyone else, and is more likely to have most of his "suggestions" followed. You will have guessed, of course, that the name is a fictitious one. He is not one of the Genro or "Elder Statesmen;" but his father was, and Kinosuki grew up in an atmosphere of possibly the most subtle diplomatic intrigue to be found anywhere in the world. Recently he came to Paris upon a secret mission connected with a Germano-Nipponese treaty which only fell through because of exposures in Berlin brought about for Itoyori's private information by the Honorable George Llangolen Trevor.

Itoyori has been a warm admirer of Madam Trevor and her brilliant husband for many years—has been their host in Tokio, their guest in Paris and London. Upon his return from Germany by airplane with the former Diplomatic Free Lance,—unseen and unsuspected,—the Viscount went to Japanese embassies in other European cities, and for several weeks his whereabouts was unknown even to the newspaper men.

About the first of July the Trevors were up in the private study at the top of their Paris home, one evening, when the new radio station in which they were financially interested—on the hills south of Paris—telephoned that Chincoteague on the Maryland coast wished to speak with Mr. Trevor. Crossing to the opposite side of the room, along which there was an operating-bench with powerful regenerative sets of twenty or more tubes, both for transmitting and receiving, Trevor got the Chincoteague operator's voice as clearly as if he were talking from another house in Paris—and on the thirty-five-hundred-meter wave he was using, there was no excessive interference. After chatting for a moment or so, the operator said that Mr. Forbes Henry—special "political man" on the Washington *Planet*—wanted to speak with him.

HAD anyone been listening in, however, he would have been able to make but little sense of what followed. In the first place, neither Trevor nor the newspaper man had been mentioned by name when the radio-operator was telephoning. What he actually said over the phone was: "C.M.D. is calling—says that H-Thirty-eight would like to speak with T-Fifty-eight upon a matter of importance." And "T-Fifty-eight" had told the radio-man at the South Station to switch them onto the "caged antenna" and then keep out until he got a separate signal that they were through talking. After that, the conversation between the Trevor mansion on the Avenue de Neuilly and the big new station on the Maryland sand-dunes was as follows—an extension-telephone connection being made with the *Planet* in Washington:

"That you—Thirty-eight?

"Yes sir! I recognize your voice perfectly. There has been a little occurrence here which I believe to be of rather more interest to you than the very small news-paragraph given it would indicate. The other night some documents held together with a rubber band were taken from a safe in the plant occupied and run by the Eastern Development Company. I think you've seen those safes and can form some idea of the difficulty the thief must have had. They reported the loss to the authorities very quietly—all the *Planet* had to go upon was mere rumor which the men in their office refused to confirm or deny. Even the rumor didn't indicate that they were much concerned over the loss. But another rumor made the Chief set me nosing about until it began to look as if I'd struck something. A young fellow who has been all his life with the largest competitor in that field recently got a job with one of our Government departments. And without any actual evidence, I think they suspect him of being the thief—believe the whole thing was a plant, started with the idea of getting secret information as to some of their business methods. You can see what that sort of suspicion might lead to if they carried it far enough!"

"Hmph! If they could actually prove anything like that against a Government employee, it would start a pretty rotten scandal, at least! You say they didn't seem much upset over the loss of the papers when they reported it?"

"From what I've been able to get at, they were not in the least concerned. I saw the manager and put it up to him pretty straight—but the only point which seemed really to interest him was how the job could have been done. He showed me the safe—after getting my promise not to print the interview, for obvious reasons—and asked if it didn't look to me an impossible one."

"Are you dead sure there *were* any papers stolen at all?"

"Reasonably so. The manager called three clerks whom he had no time to rehearse in advance, and asked each one, separately, to show me where the papers had been. They pointed out the shelf in the safe without the slightest hesitation—and there was a thin layer of dust all around, showing clearly the somewhat odd size and shape of the documents."

"Were they in English or some other language?"

"Other papers lying near where they had been on the same shelf were, apparently, in the company's private code—but from what the manager half implied, I'm under the impression that the missing ones were in one of the European languages—I've no idea which."

"Well—just what was your idea in giving me the facts, Thirty-eight?"

"First place—I don't believe the young Government chap they suspect had anything to do with it! I got him in a quiet place and tried a little third degree of my own; but he simply laughed at the idea—at first—then took a more serious view of it. Said the way *he* doped it out was that the parties who first had or wrote those papers thought there was some good reason for getting 'em back—and actually succeeded. He thought the documents were on their way to one of the European capitals—said that one of the heads of the company was in Paris right now and that, if this idea were put up to him, he might do a little quiet investigating over there. So, knowing you and he were good friends, —the papers have reported him as a guest in your house, you know,—I didn't see but what you might offer a helpful suggestion or two if the matter came around so that you could do so without the appearance of butting in."

"This is about all you can give me, is it? I saw the little paragraph in the cable-news and have been wondering whether there was any truth in it."

"It's all I can give you now, sir—but

the Chief will keep me digging until I strike something more, undoubtedly. We probably can't publish any of it for some time, but may nose out something that will add to the *Planet's* reputation for good detective work in quarters where it will do us good."

SIR ABDOOL and Madam Trevor, at the other side of the room, had heard one side of the conversation, of course,—knew who H-Thirty-eight was,—but they couldn't make anything of what they heard any more than a stranger listening in. There was, however, a thoughtful expression upon Trevor's face when he crossed over and sat down by them—lighting one of his famous long cigars.

"Some documents were taken in a mysterious manner from a safe of the Eastern Development Company—and they reported the loss to the authorities in a rather casual way. Didn't say much at the time but let it be understood by the Government people that they suspected a young Oriental in one of the Government departments—"

"The Eastern Development Company being actually a certain Oriental government—and the papers stolen from the Oriental embassy in Washington, eh? That's what it amounts to, isn't it? I remember seeing two or three lines about it in the cable news. But who is the man they're hinting might have taken the documents?"

"Chan Tso Fu—when he's in Canton. Chan Ling in Washington. Supposed to be of the commercial caste, but actually a good bit higher than that. Graduate of Cornell—speaks five languages fluently and two or three others well enough to get anywhere with them. Made quite a reputation in private theatricals while in college, really remarkable impersonations—all that sort of thing. For three years he's had a job in the Secret Service end of the State Department. Now, both of you have seen those safes in the embassy on N Street. Ordinarily they would be considered burglar-proof—or sneak-thief-proof, anyhow. As far as I know, there are none but Nipponese in any of their offices. Almost unquestionably an inside job. Chan Ling has repeatedly impersonated a Jap without detection—he is possibly the one man in Washington who might hope to secure employment in that embassy with forged letters and get away with it. So it's a perfectly natural suspicion upon their part that he was mixed up in the affair. But—and here's where Forbes Henry saw the menace of international complications in the theft—if Chan Ling *was* mixed up in it, the inference is that our own State Department was behind him and is now in possession of the stolen documents."

"Hmph! Are you dead sure that our own State Department *wasn't* behind the matter? Under such conditions it would be almost impossible to prove the charge against it—and there might be enough pressure from certain sources to make the Administration take a chance on it, particularly if those documents were supposed to contain proof of some international conspiracy against us!"

"Not a chance in the world! Not one of the great powers would dream of such a thing! Because—the minute it's done once, it's good-by to international confidence anywhere on earth! It is grossly violating one of the very few things which all governments hold inviolate. Of course, Chan Ling might have done this on his own account—or in the interests of such government as may exist just now in China—"

"That's your theory, is it, George?"

"On the contrary—I believe Chan was telling Forbes Henry the literal truth when he said he had nothing to do with the affair!"

"Well—but—the whole inference is that it would have been utterly impossible for any Caucasian to have stolen those papers!"

"I wouldn't put it quite as strong as that. We have burglars in these days who are artists in their profession—a case of this sort would appeal to them. But if Chan Ling, by reason of his education and natural gifts, is able to do what he *can* do, it's a permissible inference that there are probably other Chinese in the world fully as competent. What I'm interested in is whether any Chinaman took passage for a European port within a few days after that theft was discovered. Very few Chinese are traveling from the United States to Europe just now—though quite a number are moving in the other direction. Now—suppose we locate three more or less intelligent Chinese who took passage within a few days after the thing happened—and manage to trace their movements over here? Makes no difference

whether they crossed in the saloon or the steerage."

"Can you get that information—and be sure of it?"

"Henry can get it over there without much difficulty; if he slips up, our steamship affiliations make it a simple matter, over here."

JUST then their Afghan butler rang the little buzzer which indicated that one of the servants was outside with a message, and Madam Trevor opened the door. Sabub Ali handed her the card of the Honorable Viscount Itoyori, who had motored into the grounds and was then in the east drawing-room. Telling the faithful Afghan to go at once for the Viscount's secretary and valet, in another car, she went down to greet her old friend and fetched him up to the study—where her husband gave him the details of what he had just obtained by radio across the Atlantic.

"You must have heard of this through some of your embassies over here, Itoyori! Of course I've not the faintest idea as to what those stolen documents were—but if there's anything I can do to clear the matter up, I'm going to get busy at once!"

"Ah! Yes? That is most kind of you, my friend—but—just what is your interest in the matter, personally? We have made no fuss about it—a trivial detail, merely. Why should you sacrifice any of your most valuable time in the effort to assist us?"

"Just this, Viscount—if you will reflect a bit. The United States Government cannot afford to have such a suspicion cast upon it, even by inference. You and I know that any supposition of that sort is clearly absurd! If the thing isn't definitely settled beyond all question, it will breed more ill feeling between your country and ours! It's a little thing—but it's dangerous! You don't wish to be dragged into war any more than we do. Just suppose that some unscrupulous yellow journal thought it worth while to take a chance, and published a report stating those papers of yours *had* been taken by one of our Secret Service men and had proved to be an agreement with some European nation to destroy our government from the inside? Can't you see the dynamite in any such possibility as that? So far, our press has treated the incident as being of too slight importance to be worth any news-space. But some of the yellows are dead sure to wake up before long and enlarge upon it."

"Honorable Trevor—are you quite positive that it was *not* an agent of your government who stole those papers from our safe? Speaking frankly, confidentially—I think your State Department would have been glad to see them."

"Well—you have the advantage of me in knowing, approximately, what they were. On the other hand, I may have a slight advantage in believing our present Administration thoroughly American in all which that implies! Such a thing as our State Department's countenancing a theft of documents from ground under the protection of your flag is so far from any American idea of fair play that it is simply inconceivable. Old race-hatreds may be deliberately fanned by unscrupulous newspapers, and sections of our population who believe they have some grievance against your people as an economic force, until it is difficult for the cooler, saner heads in control of the countries to keep the pot from boiling over disastrously; but you and I both know that there are no differences of any sort between Japan and the United States which may not be adjusted amicably if the meddling trouble-breeders will but give us half a chance to do so!"

ITOYORI'S face softened—the earnest conviction of his friends as to the sort of government they had did more to reassure him in the matter than anything else which had happened in that respect.

"You think, then, it was the work of some other government—using a clever Oriental as its tool? We've done some checking up on every person in that building; they're all our people, tested in a hundred ways before they were given their present berths—"

"Wait a bit! Do you happen to know whether any American or European ladies were shown through that building by the Chargé d'Affaires, or any of the attachés, within the past month? That safe—pretty much the whole building—was shown to my wife when you were in Washington a few years ago. Isn't that done occasionally when friends of the Ambassador or some one else in authority come to call upon him?"

"To be sure! I think it would be an exceptional case for a woman to be shown

the safes where our archives are kept, while they were open—but still, it *might* have been done, more than once, just as in the case of Madam Trevor. But leaving her alone for an instant within reach of the opened doors of any safe would be so unlikely as to be considered negligible—"

"And yet those documents *might* have been removed in just such a simple way as that—if the woman had arranged a hiding-place for them which could have been instantly used without detection. Her elbow might have been actually touching that of the man showing her the building—if his head were just behind the edge of the open door, answering an unexpected question from another attaché. Suppose it was near closing-time? The clerk who shut and locked the safe a few minutes later would have been in a hurry—not particularly observant. In fact, it might have been several days before it became known that the papers were stolen, instead of temporarily removed for reference. If you can ascertain for me whether any ladies *were* shown through that particular room within two or three weeks of the theft,—tell me who they were, describe their appearance,—I may do quite a lot toward clearing up the matter. I can have a radio-connection put through in a few minutes to the Chargé d'Affaires in the building itself—it's scarcely four in the afternoon, over there, you know. We'll leave the room and let you talk with him confidentially, if you prefer."

"Why has your mind shifted from a possible Oriental to a woman, my friend—a woman of your own race? Why couldn't it have been a man?"

"You'd have watched any man too closely—just as a matter of instinct. With a handsome woman, your people would have been much more off their guard—particularly if they were fairly well acquainted with her, or the mutual friend she was accompanying. Catch the idea?"

ITOYORI had been inclined to accept the statements and beliefs of the Embassy attachés. He knew the exact arrangement of the safes and furniture in that well-guarded room below the ground-level. The idea that a visitor being shown over the building might have any opportunity whatever for abstracting papers from one of the safes while under the escort of their attachés simply hadn't occurred to him as possible—he didn't consider it so now, though he was beginning to speculate upon it somewhat.

The one outstanding fact which stuck in Itoyori's mind and in that of his fellow-diplomats in Washington was that a brilliantly educated, highly efficient Chinese in the employ of the United States State Department *had* successfully impersonated Japanese upon more than one occasion and could undoubtedly pass for one among them without question. When Itoyori came to reflect a little more carefully, he was struck with the fact that every Nipponese in the building was well known—had held his berth long enough to make any thought of his being the mysterious Chinaman absurd. A supposed Nipponese presenting himself at the Embassy with any sort of credentials, forged or otherwise, wouldn't be likely to get into that sub-basement document-room at all unless he brought orders from some diplomat in another city for certain papers, and was required to receipt for them at the safe. This might have occurred—in fact, sometimes did occur—but there had been no mention in the report sent to Itoyori that anything of the sort had happened within a month. Still—it was this possibility which had led all of them to suspect Chan Ling.

With Trevor's new suggestion in mind, however, the Viscount was entirely willing to dig up whatever additional information he could, and in a few moments, he was talking with the Chargé d'Affaires in the Embassy. He knew that both Trevor and his wife had a smattering of colloquial Japanese, but he was certain that they couldn't follow a rapid conversation in which a good deal of high-caste idiom was used, and so wouldn't hear of their leaving the room while he talked.

AT first, they gathered, more from his tone than anything else, that the man in Washington was ridiculing the possibility of any woman having an opportunity for stealing documents from the Embassy. But like all efficient men who eventually accomplish what they go after, the Viscount was quiet, courteous, but everlastingly persistent—seemingly abandoning a question only to come back with it in another form. The conversation lasted for upward of an hour, with breaks of sufficient length for the man at the other end to summon various attachés and question them. It became evident, very shortly,

that the Chargé d'Affaires was less and less sure of his facts, that he was digging up information which hadn't occurred to him as possible before. Finally the Viscount removed the head-frame from his ears and motioned to his host that he might signal the radio-station to switch off. For a moment or two he sat there before the transmitting-set in deep thought, then crossed the room and rejoined them, lighting one of Trevor's heavenly cigars.

"MY friend," he said then, "your power of intuition seems marvelous at times! Of course, in this case, you started your line of deduction upon a premise which we wouldn't have admitted in the circumstances—that it was impossible for your State Department to countenance any theft of this sort, and therefore impossible that Chan Tso Fu—to give the man his really honorable name—could have had a hand in it. You see, granting what we both know to be true concerning the way trouble between our respective countries is being constantly fomented by unscrupulous newspapers and race-war agitators, the fact remains that constant pressure is being brought to bear upon both governments by just those elements; and in a constitutional democracy such as yours the voters sometimes force an administration to do things not sanctioned by diplomatic usage. So our belief as to who might have been responsible for this theft was a perfectly natural one.

"Our people in Washington laughed at me when I began asking questions as to what men or women had been shown through the building recently—would hardly take me seriously when I asked them to investigate the matter. They don't take much stock in the theory yet—as you Americans put it; but they're a good deal less positive than they were. Because—two women, a well-known Washington society-leader and a handsome friend of hers who was presumably Austrian or German, friends of the Ambassador and Chargé d'Affaires—the Washington woman, at least—*were* shown all through the building just a week ago, from the roof to the sub-basement. And the other woman made the remark, looking at the papers in pigeonholes of one open safe, that such a receptacle was hardly necessary inasmuch as most of the papers were in our ideographs which might be 'coded' so as to be practically impossible to translate. The attaché who showed them through the room *was* spoken to by a fellow-clerk when this woman was standing before an open safe, just as you suggested, and turned his head around—probably for less than ten or fifteen seconds. The safes and the room *were* locked up within ten minutes after the party went upstairs—and the papers were not known to be missing until three days afterward, when the Ambassador sent for them as having some bearing upon another document he had received.

"They still think, over there, that it would have been impossible for the woman to have reached in and touched anything without attracting the attaché's attention—or to have concealed the papers so quickly that he wouldn't have noticed anything unusual in her actions. But for my part, I think you deduced what actually occurred—and I am filled with admiration at the quality of brains you possess, my honorable friend! Beyond that, I don't quite see that we're much further than we were before. If the woman got the papers, she has certainly disposed of them before this—and we can actually prove nothing against her."

"Well—we don't need to bother about proof if we get the papers back, do we? Did you get a description of her?"

"Oh—naturally! As far as that goes! She was a Miss Elsa Grafinstein, of New York—spoke American English without a trace of accent—undoubtedly of German or Austrian descent, but they think born in the United States. A handsome, fascinating blonde of thirty to thirty-five—weighing about a hundred and forty—five feet, five or six inches. Cultivated—spoke French and German fluently. Her father is said to be head of a chemical house with branches in New York and Chicago—evidently a multimillionaire. Presumably she has been acquainted with Mrs. Barry Stevenson for some time, but that may have been one of those sudden intimacies between people of similar tastes—cultivated, in this case, for a purpose. I think we may eliminate Mrs. Stevenson from any complicity whatever. She has been in Washington too many years, is too thoroughly American in all her ideas, too much the well-bred woman of fine old family, corresponding to our Samurai in Nippon."

"Hmph! Your Elsa Grafinstein—'Stone-countess' isn't such a bad *nom de guerre*, at that!—is probably on the At-

lantic at this moment, heading this way! A secret agent of her ability isn't likely to hand over those papers to any lesser agent in the United States; she'll be responsible for them until she places them in the hands of somebody higher up—who would be over here, in all probability. But we can find out in a few minutes just where she is—and start the tracing of those possible Chinamen at the same time. I'll call up one of my cleverest agents over in Washington and see what he can do."

IT took but a short time to get H-Thirty-eight again by radio and give him some idea of the information required. Trevor scarcely expected to hear from the *Planet* man within an hour or two, but it was nearly one in the morning—seven-thirty P. M. in Washington—before he reported again.

"The family residence in New York is closed for the summer and boarded up. Head of the family lives at one of his clubs when in town, but is said to be now in Europe. Daughter said to be guest on a yacht cruising along the Maine coast—Bar Harbor, yesterday. As a matter of fact, she's *not* on that yacht or any other which I could locate as a possibility. Name hasn't appeared on any of the passenger-lists within a week—but I unexpectedly struck a streak of luck when calling up an old newspaper man now with the Compagnie Générale. He knows the woman by sight very well—has interviewed her within three or four years. Says a Miss Enid Gorham, traveling with an Austrian maid and two dogs, is the party you're after. He was in the Company's office when she booked a suite on the *Paris*—now three days out—and was on the dock when the boat sailed. Miss Gorham was leaning over the rail, waving her handkerchief to some one—so there's no question as to her being aboard. Of course the initials marked on her luggage would be the same as the other party's. Haven't had time to locate any eastbound Chinese yet—let you know tomorrow."

"Very good, Thirty-eight! I think you've given us enough to work upon from this side. I'm very much obliged to you!"

Trevor could have gotten through a certain amount of preparation before morning, of course—but getting steamship and Government officials out of bed in the middle of the night draws attention to the matter in hand a good deal more than consulting with them during business hours. It is doubtful if more than five people in the Compagnie Générale—from the highest to the lowest—knew that permission had been given two messengers from the Honorable George Llangolen Trevor to board the big steamer *Paris* in midocean and have the master of the steamer carry out whatever instructions they decided to give. Pretty wide-open authority—that! But in the first place, Trevor had taken the matter up with a friend who was very influential in the French Government—telling him that he was trying to block a German conspiracy designed to make a serious breach between the United States and Japan, and that France was certain to be dragged into it, sooner or later, much to her disadvantage. The average person living in Paris would have been simply laughed at, of course, if he made any such request without definite proof. But France was under altogether too many obligations to the Trevors and their friends either to disbelieve what any of them stated as fact or refuse coöperation. In the matter of the big steamship company, Trevor, his wife and daughter, were influential directors upon the boards of shipping companies representing the largest combined tonnage in the world. So a request from them, backed by a strong recommendation of the French Government, had all the force of an emergency order from the company's management—it had right-of-way over pretty much everything else.

FORTY-EIGHT hours later the Trevors' famous deep-sea yacht *Ranee Sylvia* approached the *Paris* at sea under the Compagnie Générale's familiar white flag—making something over thirty knots as she came. Both ships had been in radio-communication before sighting each other and stopped their engines while still two or three miles apart. There were great deep-water billows several times the size of the *Ranee* herself, but the crests were not breaking, so that there was little difficulty in transferring a man and a woman in a motor-whaleboat from one craft to the other—hauling them up in a basket lowered from the tip of a long outboard derrick-boom. Once on board,—much to the mystification of the passengers, who had never seen anything of the sort done before on the high-seas,—the couple were taken up to Captain Rebot's private

cabin, where a luncheon with vintage wine had been prepared for them. Who they actually were, the Captain hadn't the remotest idea, but the authority which had enabled them to stop a mail-ship and board him in midocean was enough. Undoubtedly they were far more important personages than their tasteful but inconspicuous appearance indicated—he had frequently carried multimillionaires who looked just that way.

WHEN doors and windows were closed, and M. Lebaudy, as Trevor called himself, was satisfied that no ventilator or other opening from the room permitted them to be overheard by anyone outside, he gave the Captain an outline of the situation with so genial a frankness—his handsome wife supplying a detail here and there—that the shipmaster was completely won by them—anxious tó do anything in his power for his superiors in the company and the government, but even more anxious to please these delightful people who had come aboard of him in such an unusual manner.

"You were in command of a transport during the war, Captain? . . . . *Oui?* I remember seeing you at Gallipoli while I was there with my squadron. Well—it is needless for me to ask how much you love the boche—eh, *mon ami?* In this case it makes itself that there is a boche conspiracy to cause a break between the United States and Japan without any cause whatever. You have aboard of you—Suite 97 on the B deck—a passenger who appears upon your list as Mlle. Enid Gorham —accompanied by an Austrian maid and a couple of Pekingese. Actually, the woman is Elsa Grafinstein, whose father was suspected of complicity in a number of the bomb-outrages in industrial plants during the war. It was never sufficiently proved to shoot or imprison him—but the circumstantial evidence was pretty strong. In Washington, eight days ago, this woman stole some documents which—in the hands of certain governments—could be used to destroy all confidence between Nippon and the United States. Beyond all that, it is practically certain that France would be implicated in the matter as having full knowledge of what was planned and taking no diplomatic action to prevent it. Once a thing of that sort is started, it is difficult to say how far its effects may reach.

"Now—in some way or other—we propose to recover those documents before you reach port. Of course, the woman may quite naturally infer that our spectacular coming aboard has something to do with her—and hide the documents where she can get them again in a hurry just before leaving the ship—or what is more likely, tell some man who comes off in the tender to meet her just where he can put his hands upon them. But if no attempt is made to interfere with her for another twenty-four hours, no move to introduce us or pay her more attention than any of the other passengers, I think she'll be likely to get the documents back in her own possession, so as to be sure of not losing them. . . . . Are the adjoining suites all occupied?"

"But no, m'sieur! It happens that the one across the gangway from Ninety-seven was abandoned on the second day out by two women who wished to exchange into something less expensive and receive a consideration on the passage-money. It is very rarely done, you comprehend—but in this case they discover themselves to be friends of directors on the company's board. You shall occupy Ninety-five—none but Mlle. Gorham and her maid will observe your comings and goings. The passengers will regard, however, where you are placed in the salon. Had M'sieur thought of the explanation to account for the coming aboard in such an unusual manner?"

"Well—how would this do? I took the trouble to bring with me a couple of master's uniforms—summer and winter ones—with engineer's insignia, indicating a fleet engineer with the rank of captain. Drop a hint among the passengers that a patent of mine is being tried out in the engine-room and that I wanted to see it working under actual sea-conditions. Doubtless your engineer and I can arrange something that will look like a bona-fide experiment, below. Then, if a vacancy at your own table can be arranged, that's the obvious place to put us in the circumstances—if not, the chief engineer's table, or at the head of some other one where an officer usually presides. I'll appear in uniform about the ship—my wife can hold her own with any of the passengers and tell them how she insisted upon accompanying me."

"Excellent, m'sieur! Capital! That is explanation most admirable for every demand except in the mind of my radio-

operator. You can scarcely deceive him so easily!"

"Just leave him to me—with the privilege of entering the radio-room any time I please. I'll be using his sets before you know it!"

THE capacities for inference and deduction have always been rather uncanny with both George and Nan Trevor. Crediting them with super-intelligence is but trying to express, incompletely, the sort of brains which incessant use has given them. Twenty years ago each was exceptionally keen-witted and observant—but now, after the thousands of complicated problems they have solved and the adventures through which they have been, their minds are almost as receptive to impressions of which the average person would be entirely unconscious, as a pliotron-tube in a regenerative radio-set. In this case they couldn't have foreseen more closely the Grafinstein woman's mental reaction to their coming aboard the *Paris* if they had been inside her skull. She was in her suite with her maid when the engines stopped—looked out of a window, saw the approaching yacht.

"Gerta! Come here to the window—quickly! Look! That yacht is putting a man and a woman aboard of us! It is possible that we are to be arrested! This package must not be found upon either of us—yet we must conceal it somewhere that will be easily accessible if we wish to get it again in a hurry! Either Raupt or General von Ludenstein will come off in the tender outside of Plymouth. As he will not be examined at the Customs, the packet must be given to him unobserved. Where shall we hide it—before those people come aboard?"

"Certainly nowhere in this suite, madame!" The Austrian maid was of course a member of the political organization, herself—but of much lesser caliber and standing than Miss Grafinstein.

"Any fool would know that! What we must have in two minutes is a practicable and fairly safe idea. Now think, curse you—*think!*"

"Madame—have you ever seen a steward dusting the under side of a table in the salon? Of course, it must be occasionally done, but I think only when the steamer is overhauled in port—"

"You mean the cross-braces on top of the legs, which support the table from side to side? On the upper side of one of those? Not so bad a place of concealment—but the packet would slide off and fall to the deck when the ship rolls. Then one of the stewards would be sure to pick it up if some passenger didn't!"

"Madame—I have formed the American habit of chewing their sticky gum—I find it enables me to think better, and there is frequently a use for the stuff. A small lump of it will stick the packet on the upper side of that cross-board so that it cannot fall off, no matter which way the ship rolls!"

"The devil! I hadn't thought of that! The stuff would hold the packet in almost any place we thought of concealing it! But it must be used while warm from the mouth—not?"

"To stick properly—yes, madame."

"Give me some of it—quickly! I can say it was recommended for seasickness. I will go, with a book, and sit in one of the little bays at the side of the salon—on the transom, with the table in front of me. Nobody will be able to see what I am doing!"

FOR the next hour or two both women expected a summons to the Captain's cabin at any moment—but nothing happened. They were in their suite when a couple of stewards came along to install the new arrivals in Ninety-five, across the little side-gangway from their own door—and again they were almost positive that they would be under espionage from the opposite suite. But the couple were volubly talking with the stewards in such perfect French as to leave no doubt concerning their nationality.

The Austrian whispered to her supposed mistress: "None of the French would be after us! Americans or Japanese—yes—naturally. But not French! They wouldn't be doing police work for other nations!" Opening their wood a crack "on the hook," to get a look at their new neighbors, they were presently surprised and relieved to see the man come out in immaculate white-and-gold uniform—the "summer whites" of a fleet engineer ranking as captain. His wife followed him along to the after companionway and then below, along deck-gangways, to the door of the engine-room—chatting about some mechanical invention of his as they went. When they disappeared, the Austrian maid whispered again:

"You see, madame! It is but the company's fleet engineer and his wife—come aboard to see the testing of some invention he has had put into this ship!"

"Then—why wouldn't it have answered his purpose as well if he boarded us at Plymouth and made the short run to Havre? No need of going to all that bother with the yacht!"

"One does not get the great sea-waves in the Channel, madame—possibly he wished to observe how his invention worked in midocean."

"He could doubtless have crossed on this boat to or from New York had he wished to do so. The higher position a man holds, the more time he usually has for anything he considers important to do—and he can always ask questions by radio. No! . . . . I'm inclined to agree with you in thinking they can't be after us—but I'm just as thoroughly convinced that this 'testing-out an invention' isn't the whole story! I'm even inclined to doubt his being really the line's engineer. If he and his wife—or companion, whoever she is—were Americans, the whole business would be quite in line with what Americans are always doing—fool things which no other race would consider necessary or think of attempting. But a Frenchman and his wife pulling off any such crazy stunt as transferring from a yacht to a big liner in midocean with a heavy sea running—no! It isn't done!

"If they make no suspicious move toward us before tomorrow night, I'll be satisfied that they know nothing whatever about us, and get the packet back into my own possession. We'll settle down in our deck-chairs and go to sleep as if it were our custom to be on deck a few hours at least—and make sure they see us there. That will give them all the opportunity they can wish for searching our suite and luggage! We'll give them three hours if possible. Then—if nothing in our suite is disturbed, we can be fairly certain they know nothing about us."

THIS was straight reasoning—if the Trevors hadn't beaten her to it. One of the first things they had done after being locked in the Captain's cabin was to hand him fifteen hundred American dollars with instructions that each of the saloon stewards was to be sent for and given twenty-five upon the understanding that he was to report every move of the supposed Miss Enid Gorham and her maid—everything sent to their suite, everything observed in it while carrying out such errands—with a bonus of an additional twenty-five dollars if he reported anything unusual or suspicious. Another sum was left to subsidize the deck-stewards.

In the preliminary questioning of each steward as to what he might have observed during the voyage, the fact came out that Miss Gorham—who was obviously very far from the gum-chewing type—had been observed in the saloon, chewing vigorously, at the very moment the supposed fleet engineer and his wife were coming aboard. She had been heard to say, afterward, that gum had been recommended to her as a preventive of sea-sickness. But up to that time she had never shown the least symptoms of *mal-de-mer*—the ship's officers had recognized in both women the type which, constitutionally, is almost never sick. The Trevors were in the Captain's room while the steward was speaking of this—but were apparently absorbed in a chart on a transom-desk several feet away, and were not connected with the matter in the steward's mind. They hadn't missed a word of his report—but at first were inclined to think the gum-chewing negligible.

LATER, leaning over the rail of the sparr deck, where no passengers were permitted to come, Trevor asked his wife to mention the one spot on the entire ship which she would choose for the concealment of some object which she might wish to recover in a hurry and yet feel that there was no chance of its being found by others, meanwhile.

"H-m-m-m—in a hurried decision, the chances are greatly in favor of the wrong place being selected, because so many considerations enter into such a selection. For example, it used to be an axiom in the Indian Secret Service, when Daddy was alive and I was going about the Delhi bazars as a Hindu boy picking up all sorts of information, that the safest place to conceal anything was always the most public place—some locality where people were constantly passing and repassing—sitting about, eating and drinking. I remember upon one occasion that I found a letter from a certain conspiring Maharajah behind a loose brick just below the coping of a public well in one of the smaller city squares—a coping over which probably

three hundred people lowered their buckets every day in the year without once thinking of or looking at the condition of the bricks which lined the well."

"Right! Absolutely correct—I've proved it a hundred times! But what place on this ship would correspond to your well?"

"It would have to be in something not disturbed by any emergency fire-drill—which would bar any of the boats or life-rafts. It couldn't be in the smoke-room—that would make it impossible for a woman to conceal anything without drawing attention. Behind moldings or grilles along any of the corridors or gangways, there would be too much risk of some one's popping out of a side-gangway and catching one in the act. Preferably it would be in a place where one's attitude—posture, actions at the moment of concealment—would be absolutely normal to the place itself, I think, so that no attention could be drawn to what one was doing."

"Hmph! That sifts it down to just about one place and one physical occupation on the whole ship, as nearly as I can figure it—a person seated at one of the tables in the saloon, eating, writing letters or reading—preferably a transom-seat in one of the bays, facing the center of the saloon! In such a position the table would hide any motion of the hands below its edge. And if the under side of those tables is cleaned or dusted at any time except while the ship is in port, I never saw it done! I've been in ship's saloons at all hours of the day and night, too.

"Well—your process of elimination has sifted out the right spot, Nan. I think we could gamble on that. But—wait a bit! *Wait a bit!* That gum-chewing incident the steward mentioned! If you placed a paper up under one of those tables on a cross-piece, it would slip off with the roll of the ship, wouldn't it? Bound to! Well—suppose you stuck it there with a wad of American rubber-gum—shopgirl gum—warm from the mouth—eh? By thunder! That steward mentioned specifically the bay where the Grafinstein woman was sitting when he saw her jaws working! He only spoke of the occurrence because he was hungry for that extra bonus the Captain promised them—not because he really disbelieved the reason she gave for doing it. People go for years immune to seasickness and then get a touch of it from absurd causes. Very good! I'm just about convinced that his little contribution was by far the most valuable of any we'll get from the stewards.

"Well—let's consider a bit? Those two women are napping in their chairs on the B deck at this moment—and I'll wager they'll give us all the chance we could ask to search their room and luggage while they're up there! I think we'll take the dare—but search in another direction! Get a book or magazine and come below with me. Sit in that bay where the Grafinstein woman was—I'll stand and talk for a minute, then leave you on some errand, but I wont be entirely out of sight—will come back and get you within two or three minutes."

NOW, in all this reasoning, there was nothing marvelous or spectacular—nothing which any really intelligent person could not do if he had formed the habit of using his head. The whole process, merely, was scientific reasoning and deduction. To the best of their knowledge, the Grafinstein woman had the stolen papers from an embassy in Washington. Such a woman, instinctively, would see in any unusual occurrence on board a possible menace to herself and her mission. Until convinced that her fears were groundless, she would put any incriminating paper or object out of her immediate possession on the belief that her room and luggage were very likely to be searched, and conceal them in what she considered a safe place from which they might be easily and quickly recovered. This was all of it the strongest kind of probability, you understand.

Very well! Then, having followed the line of reasoning so far, it remained but to work out with almost mathematical certainty the sort of place she would select for concealment. The steward's recollection of the gum-chewing incident was the one feature which might be considered luck—yet even that wasn't blind chance. The tips and bonuses arranged for the stewards in advance had been calculated to bring out just this seemingly unimportant little detail. They were charges of small-shot more than likely to bring down *something*. From first to last, both Trevor and Madam Nan look back upon the adventure in its entirety as pure matching of wits against wits all the way through, and winning in such a way that the Grafinstein woman doesn't yet know where or how she misplayed her hand—whether the documents slipped to the deck and were picked

up by a steward or one of the passengers, whether some one really outplayed her and found them where they were stuck with the gum, or whether they were discovered in the course of a cleaning such as she thought never occurred at sea, and were handed over to the purser.

You see, she was in a position where she didn't dare pretend she had lost anything and ask if anyone had found it. That would have branded her at once, in the eyes of whoever now had the papers, as the Embassy thief—and for the sake of her future usefulness to the Charlottenburg Junta, she couldn't afford any such direct proof of her actual complicity. Even with the Trevors, their evidence was purely circumstantial—it would have been impossible to convict her in any court either of stealing the documents or having them on the steamer. They were recovered from the under side of a salon-table on the *Paris*—and that's all there was to it. What the devil could you prove by *that?*

SEALING the documents in a sheet of thick paper with her name written on the outside and her family seal used upon the wax in so many places that any attempt at tampering with it must have been detected, Nan placed it in the safe in the Captain's cabin until the ship reached Plymouth—following Elsa Grafinstein's similar play. But in this instance Elsa and the Austrian did ransack everything in the Trevors' suite very thoroughly, the night before the steamer made port—driven by sheer desperation to taking the chance. Of course they found nothing which did not corroborate the Lebaudy impersonation assumed by the pair, in every particular—the Free-Lances having learned many years before the value of being thorough in each little detail.

From Plymouth the Trevors motored to their own estate in South Devon, where they obtained the latest type of 'plane which had been perfected in the Trevor Hall shops, and came down two hours later at Le Bourget in the northern suburbs of Paris. Viscount Itoyori had been requested to use their home on the Avenue de Neuilly as his residence while in Europe, and so they found him there upon their arrival and took him, with Sir Abdool and Earl Lammerford, up to the study at the top of the house. Here the packet was handed over with the request that Itoyori carefully examine it to see whether the documents were really those stolen from the Washington Embassy.

"But of course you've been through these yourselves, my friends, and know exactly what they are!"

"*Au contraire,* Viscount! They are exactly as we received them—with the original seals unbroken, as far as we can determine. I think the Grafinstein woman had some fear of being caught with the goods and thought it might go easier for her if she knew nothing as to the contents."

"Permit me to express much amazement and very great admiration of that quality which you Americans term fair play—which you seem to live up to where other races would not! The outer inscription, as you see, is in German—giving the impression that the subject-matter is also. But the secret Junta in Charlottenburg, who sent these data and communications to our ambassador in Washington, considered them far too incriminating to be set down in anything but our own ideographs—partly in code, at that. They were sent at the time when the Junta rather contemptuously assumed that we must sign that military and commercial treaty with them, from self-interest if from nothing else—the treaty which you good friends kindly exposed to us in its true inwardness a few months ago.

"Because of your disinterested courtesy in that matter and your honesty in this," pursued Itoyori, "I will give you the gist of these documents. They promise to supply us in large quantities, delivered in any part of the United States, gas-bombs capable of wiping out the populations of entire cities—fire-bombs which are absolutely inextinguishable and will destroy whole districts in spite of any known fire-fighting appliance—two weeks before any declaration of war between Nippon and the United States. Of course we must not for a moment assume that this communication is backed either by the present German government or the mass of German population. It is merely from a secret Junta which claims to hold the balance of power in that country and which nobody outside of the various chancelleries ever heard of. My secretary will make a translation of the documents which I will present to Mrs. Trevor. The originals, of course, we must keep among our archives. I place no restrictions upon what use Madame sees fit to make of her translation."

Fork-eye's Flag Still Flies

A thrilling adventure story of the Louisiana South Coast, by the man who wrote "The Daughter of Nez Coupé" and "Politics Is Politics."

By Meigs O. Frost

IN a small and stuffy *chambre garnie* looking out over one of the narrow Old World streets of that New Orleans which clusters close around the French Market, a man and a woman stood face to face. Outside, the cheerful chatter of the neighborly Vieux Carré was strangely hushed.

It was the steaming summer of 1898. Unknown then were many of the weapons of science in its war on pestilence—weapons that long since have made a playground of Panama. Yellow fever had stormed the seaport.

"I regret deeply, madame," burlesqued the man, "to announce that the open-air lakeside summer opera has come to an unexpected close." Then his voice changed to a conversational pitch.

"It's all over, Jeannie," said he. "The company disbanded this afternoon. Wolcott paid us off. It might be worse. But while Yellow Jack holds the boards, there's nothing here for actor-folk. It's *sauve qui peut,* and the devil take the hindmost."

His wife glanced at the slender roll of banknotes he laid on the table.

"It might be worse," she agreed. "What comes next, Don?"

"They're calling for volunteer nurses—for anyone who'll help," said Donald Galbraith. "But I'm thinking of wee Sandy there."

Their blent glances swerved to the big tester-top bed that dwarfed with its ancient bulk the tiny room's spindle-legged chairs and table. Stretched asprawl on the counterpane, a boy of five slept soundly.

"I'm thinking of Sandy too," said Sandy's mother. "They're calling for nurses, you said?"

"Yes," Galbraith answered absently. His mind was on something other than the city's need just then. It was a moment before he spoke again.

"It's not going to be specially easy to leave town and get North. I was talking it over with some of the company today. The shotgun quarantine is rigid. The whole South's in a blue funk over the situa-

tion. They've fought one battle already, over at the Rigolets, by the Mississippi line. The boat patrol drove the refugees back."

"How can anyone leave, then?"

"Oh, it can be managed—by boat across Lake Pontchartrain, or in closed coaches on the railroad, by special permission. Jean, is it right to keep the baby here, exposed, when the city's panic-stricken and they're dying like flies?"

"It's that bad, then?"

"It's bad."

Jean Galbraith stood with loosely clasped hands, thinking.

"Is it right to keep the baby here?" She repeated his question slowly. "Don, is it right to have Sandy grow up and learn that his father and mother ran away from a city where the folk had been kind to them—when that city called for help in its need?"

A curious glint grew in her blue eyes.

"It's of you and the boy I'm thinking, Jeannie. You know that."

"Of course I know it, Donald."

BOTH stood watching the sleeping boy. Then the woman walked to the battered theatrical trunk in the corner. She opened it, brought forth a worn volume.

"I think," said she, "that the Admiral has something to say about this."

Slender fingers riffled familiar pages.

"Do you know, Don, many a time my father used to read this very book to us when I was a small girl, years ago, back in Rosartie."

Quietly she smiled, as one who has found comfort. Softly she read aloud:

" 'Admiral Duncan, lying off the Texel with his own flagship the *Venerable*, heard that the whole Dutch fleet was putting to sea. He told Captain Hotham to anchor alongside him in the narrowest part of the channel and fight his vessel until she sank. "I have taken the depth of the water," added he, "and when the *Venerable* goes down, my flag will still fly." ' "

Her voice held low, lest she awaken the sleeping lad. But toward the end of the passage it sounded clear as the ring of tempered steel.

Silently she looked at her husband. His answer shone in his eyes.

"I was Jeannie Duncan before I was Mrs. Donald Galbraith," she said gently. "Of course we'll stay and nurse, Don. Old Madame Souchon will care for Sandy while we're away from the house. We'll come through safe, never fear. But if we shouldn't, we want the flag to keep on flying, don't we? That's really all that counts. Where do we go to volunteer for nursing?"

Arms clasped and strained. Lips met softly. They tiptoed from the room, hand in hand.

Still asprawl, a mite of a lonely figure in the wide field of the counterpane, the little boy slept.

LONG, long weeks afterward, old Madame Souchon, gaunt and lined of face from that unforgetable summer, sat at coffee and gossip with Madame Hauterive, her crony, whose *chambres garnies* likewise held of lodgers only the most superior.

"I have wept out my heart, but to what avail?" Madame Souchon was saying. "I have advertised in the journals. I have sought aid of the police, even. All are kind of heart, but stupid. The result? Nothing—absolutely nothing, I tell you.

" 'What can be expected?' I am asked. Is one missing child to be found, when, look you, a city's dead are collected in carts, are buried like the dead of a battlefield? The boy is vanished.

"And his mother and father! *Ah, les braves!* Like soldiers they died. Like soldiers of France! What is there more to say? They could have fled. They were not of us. Singers in summer opera in the open air at the lake shore, when the fever came. But they stayed and nursed until that fever struck them down.

"In my house they died—smiling. Both, I think, slightly crazed! Before the end, he asked that we bring him from his trunk his — 'keelt,' he called it. *Ce jupon de montagnard écossais.* He had worn it, it seems, as a soldier of his king. He died with his hand touching its folds.

"And she! *Dérangée dans le cerveau, sans doute.* Touched in the head by that fever. She wandered. As the end neared, look you, she spoke of an admiral and of a flag that still would fly above waters of which the depth had been measured. *Incroyable! Ah, ces Écossais!*

"To me they left that child. I would have reared him as my own, so long dead. And he is gone. *Un grave p'tit garçon!* I know even no address to which to write. All that is left is a trunk of some clothes, some plays, and a book worn with much reading. I have stored it in my attic. Who knows? Some day there may come a

searcher who can explain. To me it is a mystery of the greatest."

It was a mystery old Madame Souchon never lived to solve.

NONE had noticed, that day the pestilence was at its height, when tiny Alexander Galbraith strayed out of bounds from the small courtyard where Madame Souchon had placed him while she fluttered, distracted, about her house.

Awhile he played quietly. Then the damp flags that paved the court, even the great clay jars in which once sailing vessels brought olive oil from overseas and in which now grew clusters of spiky Spanish bayonet, even the lone palm tree—all had ceased to interest him. Down the cool arched passage he set forth, found the heavy plank door ajar, and stepped out onto Dumaine Street's banquette.

Affairs of vital interest loomed ahead. He investigated. For a while he gazed wide-eyed at the stalls of the French Market. A banana, donated by a fruit-vender, took the foreground. Munching it, he wandered on. He crossed a street in which groups of urchins played. He found the fascinating steel rails of traffic, crossed them, and came to a marvelous plank-floored domain past which surged a wide and muddy torrent, sweeping in a great curve.

There, moored close to the wharf, a fishing lugger tugged at its hawsers. He inspected it gravely. A slanting plank led to the deck. Guarded by those miracles on which childhood alone can depend, he crossed the short gangway safely and started to explore this entrancingly new world that was exclusively his.

A delightful cavelike opening yawned before him. He entered. It was hot. But all the world was hot just then. Outside the sunshine glared and hurt his eyes. Inside all was dark and quiet. The little feet were weary from unaccustomed wandering. The blue-gray eyes drooped. Curling up on a ragged quilt in the lugger's narrow forepeak, the deck scant inches above his nose, Alexander Galbraith snuggled down like a lost puppy—and went to sleep.

MOTHERLY arms held him close to a deep bosom when he woke. The stars were shining high above him. Close at hand on the deck a charcoal brazier winked its red eye at him in friendly fashion. A swarthy man he was later to know as Papa Pietro, one hand on the tiller, was looking at him as he cuddled in the arms of the woman he was soon to call Mamma Angela.

Black water streamed away on every hand as the great red sail of the lugger, bellied taut by the night breeze, sent them past the low, dark lines of far-stretching cypress-forest and swamp.

"What fortune!" Mamma Angela was saying. "And I had just come from the shrine of St. Rita! Well do they call her the saint of the impossible!"

All of this was utterly unintelligible to Alexander Galbraith, for it was spoken in the swift and corrupted argot of the South Coast, where Pietro Battistella and Angela, his wife, had lived these many years.

While old Pietro had sold his cargo of shrimp, while his wife, bereft of her own boy, had gone to pray at St. Rita's shrine where so many women have knelt in agony of soul, tiny Sandy had wandered aboard the *Bright Star* lugger. They had been far down toward Barataria Bay, the city miles behind, when he had been found in the tiny forepeak.

NOTHING of this he knew. But he knew that the *jambalaya* presently set before him, hot from the charcoal brazier, was good food, though strange of taste. He ate. Awhile, from his refuge in Mamma Angela's great lap, he watched the stars twinkling high above him. The ripple of the water at the prow, the soft crooning of the peasant woman's voice, grew faint and dim. He slept again.

Thus came Alexander Galbraith, unnamed, unknown, to the world of swamp and bayou where a child more or less is a small affair, where come neither the police nor the journals to which Madame Souchon had appealed.

"Bambino," Mamma Angela called him, naturally. "Bam" it emerged from the daily life of the Filabrou shrimp-platform where Papa Pietro presently made headquarters between shrimp-seining trips.

Boyhood at five is plastic. Old memories faded. They vanished. His baby voice even took on the soft coastal slurring drawl. The South Coast absorbed Alexander Galbraith, body and heart and soul—body and heart completely, but soul—well, there were years ahead. Some birthrights are not traded away, either by Fate's compulsion or Esau's bribe.

A GROUP of men, cigars clamped in teeth, sat in the office of the Louisiana Department of Conservation in the great white courthouse building in New Orleans. The booming, open-air voice of big Alexander Winthrop, commissioner in charge, filled the apartment.

"So there's the situation," he was saying. "We need a fighting son-of-a-gun on that Mississippi border patrol, a man who isn't afraid of hell or high water. Since the Pearl River decision established the line and gave the best oyster-reefs of the lot to Louisiana, this oyster-pirate business has got to be more than a joke.

"Buck Crepelle and those babies of his have simply organized to raid the Louisiana reefs and slip over to the Mississippi coast packeries without paying their taxes. That gang is costing this State thousands of dollars every year.

"It's up to you, Major." He wheeled toward Major Wayne, field man of the Oyster Commission since its organization. "Got anyone in mind to take over the patrol and fight those birds to a standstill?"

"You bet I have," drawled the Major. "And when I tell him Buck Crepelle is big boss of the gang we're turning him loose on, he'll be there like a Bayou Lafourche girl at dancing-time."

"Who is he?"

"Runs his own lugger out of Houma, down Terrebonne way, just now. Fork-eye Baham, they call him. Had my eye on him these two-three years."

"Fork-eye Baham?" Commissioner Winthrop's tone was meditative. "Isn't he the man backed up our agent Johnny Foulkes? Lent Johnny a hand that time they had some gun-play over shrimp-seining out of season down Grand Cailloux?"

"Same one," said the Major.

They're not long on red tape in the Department of Conservation. They slash knots and take shortcuts that are the despair of sticklers for routine and formal procedure. But they "back their men from the other side of hell and back again." And they have a habit of getting results.

"You run down Houma way and tell him he's captain of the *Pelican,*" said Commissioner Winthrop.

The Major grinned amicably.

"No need to go that far," said he. "Fork-eye's in my office across the corridor. I thought you'd be needing him, so I sent for him last week. Told him to get here in time for this meeting. Got in this morning. S'pose you give him that commission yourself."

Half an hour later the wiry figure of a young man stepped out of the great Greek-pillared entrance of the courthouse and headed for the New Orleans waterfront. By his side walked Major Wayne. Together they boarded the battleship-gray little motor-cruiser that was the *Pelican* patrol-boat, swinging at her Bienville Wharf mooring. Forward, on her upper deck, shone dully the metal of a business-like one-pound rapid-fire rifle, newly set on its naval mount.

Fork-eye Baham had taken over his new command.

Orders crackled crisply. The *Pelican* surged to sudden life. With chugging engines she headed downstream for the Passes, to take up her Mississippi-border patrol.

FROM his earliest memories Fork-eye Baham had played a lone hand. Life on the Louisiana South Coast had never taught him much about the brotherhood of man. On luggers of the shrimp and oyster fleets, on shrimp-platforms, in oyster-shucking sheds, he had found it a hard, pitiless game.

Had Donald and Jean Galbraith, long since sleeping in an old New Orleans cemetery of gray and lichened tombs, come back to see the scarred, hard-handed, silent youth, naught but sheer divination would have revealed in him their "wee Sandy."

Again he had been orphaned when he was eight, on the Filabrou Platform, this time the "Bam" that old Pietro and Angela Battistella had brought into bayou-land when their lugger *Bright Star* had come from New Orleans in the year of the great fever. Pietro, neck-deep off Timbalier Island, had trod on a sting-ray—the Coast's dreaded "stingaree"—as he tugged at his shrimping seine, and died from the infection of its barbed and slimy lance. Mamma Angela had "gone shopping in Quebec," as the quaint coastal argot puts it, victim of one of the obscure epidemics that from time to time range the coast.

Wire-strung, tow-headed, mahogany-tanned, the boy made himself useful about the platform for his keep. By day he peeled unending piles of potatoes, scoured innumerable pots and pans, mended the mesh of torn seines that seemed to stretch

miles on miles. At night, in the narrow bunk of a platform shack, or on piled sacks in its storeroom, he slept beneath a grimy mosquito-bar in which the holes were mended by the simple system of knotting twine in a tight twist behind the hole.

The batterings of his rough life he took with curious impassivity. Almost impersonally he fought the boys of his own size. The beatings of his elders he stood silently. He seemed devoid of any marked affection, of any hate.

Then he met Buck Crepelle.

HE was fifteen when he joined the crew of Crepelle's shrimp-seining lugger the *Good Child*, working on shares. Hardened and observant beyond his years, he tugged at the heavy seine, alternately soaked in salt water and grilled in the blazing South Coast sun. With the polyglot shrimpers and platform men he reveled in the riotous dances when the catch sold well—when barrels of California's cheap red wine, their heads knocked in, emptied swiftly under the onslaught of gurgling dippers.

Strange product of the Coast was this Crepelle, son of a Cajun father and an Italian mother, a lank-sided slattern he had never known. Shrewdness was his, with an iron-hard strength and a cold brutality that carried him far in his world. Kick and cuff and curse marked his handling of the men of the *Good Child's* crew. They were the scourings of the coast.

It was a hard school for any youth. In it, taught by a master of his kind, the lad learned the lesson of hate. His name, even, was a monument to that hatred.

The edge of a heavy galvanized iron bucket, hurled in a drunken platform fight, caught him squarely on the brow one dance-night when Crepelle had opened the barrels of wine that kept the crew from calculating too closely how much he had bilked them on their share of the shrimp he sold. The boy emerged from bandages, a livid scar aslant his forehead, his blue-gray eyes curiously twisted from the flesh marred by rough surgery. Up to then he had been "Bam" only. Thereafter he was "Fork-eye" in his rough world.

It was Crepelle who had hurled the bucket; who gibed at the boy in his disfigurement. The hate in the lad's breast swelled and simmered. Then it broke into open revolt, for a few months later Crepelle, in brutal wantonness over a misunderstood order and a wrong twist of the steering-wheel, lashed the lad with a rope-end until Fork-eye sank half unconscious, to the deck of the *Good Child*. Next night they moored at Filabrou platform. Still aching, battered and weak, the boy, now nearly eighteen, slipped away in a cracked pirogue.

With amazing daring he paddled that toothpick of a leaking cypress dugout clear to Timbalier Lighthouse. There he took refuge with the keeper of the light, and in his supply launch was taken by that kindly soul up Bayou Terrebone to the sleepy little city of Houma. Awhile he worked in ice-plant and shrimp-factory, seined on shares again, saved cannily, and in the end bought a share in a lugger that he came eventually to own.

"What name?" asked the agent at Conservation Department headquarters when he applied for his license.

"Fork-eye," said the lad.

"Quit your kidding. Fork-eye what?"

"Just Fork-eye—an' Bam."

They were really the only names he knew.

Now the surname "Baham," which, pronounced in the coastal drawl, sounds much like "Bam," is not uncommon in Louisiana and Mississippi—though the Landrys, Broussards and Bourgeoises outvote it. And so Mamma Angela's old pet name for her miraculously found *bambino* was listed in this distorted form on the official records.

MONTH followed month, and Fork-eye had never seen Crepelle. The meeting, though, was inevitable. At last it came. On the sleepy Houma waterfront they stood face to face one morning as Buck leaped from his lugger to the wharf apron. Then it was that the South Coast gossips learned of the bitter feud that boiled behind Fork-eye's locked lips.

"Well! Well! Look who's here!" whooped Crepelle with a mock geniality that never masked for a moment the bullying threat behind it. He stepped toward the lad with hand raised—whether for rough clap on the shoulder or for blow, none could tell until it descended. But it never descended.

Fork-eye's right hand flashed to his pocket. It came to light gripping the great stag-handled clasp-knife of the coast. The five-inch blade, needle-pointed, razor-edged, clicked open as he pressed the spring.

Crepelle stood motionless, his jaw slack at the white-faced, blazing-eyed fury of the youngster.

"Yo' lay a fingeh on me, Buck, an' yo' betteh kill me!" The warning came, growled deep past jutting law. " 'Cause if yo' touch me an' don' kill me, man, I'm carvin' yo' so they'll bury yo' in a shrimp-basket!"

"What yo' so sore about, boy?" Buck laughed with a surface-assurance he was far from feeling.

"No need to tell yo'," came the throaty answer. "Yo' know. But I'm tellin' yo' this: Watch yo' step, Buck. Time's comin' when I'm gettin' yo'—an' I'll get yo' right when it comes."

Now, by the code of the coast, this was open declaration of war.

"Don' be a fool, boy." Crepelle had hold of himself now. "Yo' talkin' mighty big fo' yo' size. Me, I aint got wheah I kill kids yet when they get ha'd-headed. I lick 'em. Yo' ought to know."

"I know, Buck." Fork-eye's tone was bitter. "Lickin' kids is yo' specialty. I aint bein' no fool. But I got yo' sized up right. Yo' a bearcat when yo' got the edge on the man yo' handle. If it aint weight, it's brass knucks or a knife or a gun. I tol' yo' watch yo' step around me. I meant it. I'm gettin' the edge on yo' afteh this."

"Kid talk," said Crepelle, and turned to the group of shrimpers who had witnessed the clash. With rough jest he spoke of other things as the youth went his way.

But though Buck laughed it off, he never forgot it. Neither did Fork-eye, nor the folk of the South Coast among whom the story spread.

A WILDERNESS of low and marshy islands streaked by the silver paths of obscure bayous, passes and channels; great stretches of watery horizons; a "land" that cuddled oozily to the surface of the waters from which it had pushed its way as in the primeval days when earth first rose dripping from illimitable depths—all this was Fork-eye's new domain. Up past Lake Borgne he drove the *Pelican*—that same Lake Borgne that once ruffled to the keels of Pakenham's fleet of invading veterans who died in windrows beneath the rifles of Andrew Jackson's men. There, where the Pearl River separates Louisiana from Mississippi, he took up his patrol.

Here lay the choicest oyster-reefs of the southeast coast. They had been the prize over which the two sovereign States had wrangled in a legal battle ending only when the United States Supreme Court ruled that out to the three-mile limit the State border-line followed the eastward-twisting Pearl River channel through those shallow waters, as Louisiana had contended. Mississippi had held that a straight line drawn south from river-mouth out to deep water marked the border.

That decision threw the richest of the oyster-beds under Louisiana control. The State had laid a tax on every barrel of oysters. The oystermen came under the stringent Louisiana conservation law.

NOW, men who fight hurricane and norther, who soak in salt water and broil beneath a blazing sun for their bread, who are the sport of weather and a merciless market—men such as these take less than kindly to State regulation and taxes. Since their grandfathers built the first cypress luggers and lolloped through the Gulf swells dragging their primitive oyster-dredges behind them, there had been no tax. Why should a group of men sitting in silken robes a thousand miles away say a few words that meant fifteen to twenty good dollars out of pocket for every Tacko, Wop and Cajun—the Coast's name for Austrian, Italian and Frenchman—every time an oyster cargo was landed? Why, indeed?

Mississippi made no such demands. Louisiana did, and sought to enforce them. And the best reefs were off the Mississippi coast, though inside the court-set Louisiana line—a man-dictated barrier marked only by a long string of red-painted Nunn buoys.

So the oyster-pirate game developed, with patrol-boats few and oystermen many. It began much as small boys raid orchards. It grew in bitterness. It ended in open warfare.

Chief of the raiders was Buck Crepelle. Knowing every inch of that coast, navigating the tortuous and shallow channels almost by instinct, he had played hide-and-seek with the conservation patrol for months. His luggers, laden with oysters dredged ruthlessly from the choicest reefs, had slipped time after time across the Biloxi line, fattening his balance in the Biloxi bank.

QUIETLY the *Pelican* went her way, covering the routine patrol, checking licenses, chugging here and there while her young captain familiarized himself once more with the southeastern coastal channels and with the oystermen it was his task to watch. Major Wayne, after the first swing around the route, dropped off at Biloxi, took train for New Orleans and left him lord of the domain.

Crepelle had not yet appeared on the scene, though three of his boats Fork-eye had boarded during the first trip. Their owner was in New Orleans, he learned. The young patrol captain silently bided his time.

His boat was a delight to his trained eye. His crew, Jack Estopinal, engineer; Jules Bardoux, engine-room helper; Peter, Jim and Nick, deckhands; and Sambola the cook—these swiftly rounded into a smoothly efficient machine under his leadership. . . . .

News travels fast on the South Coast. From Pascagoula on the east, through Biloxi and Gulfport, Waveland and Dunbar, sped the word that old Captain Patten had been replaced by "that Houma Cajun Fork-eye, the same felleh that's gunnin' fo' Buck Crepelle. Don' say much, but he sho' means business."

Across the Rigolets leaped the tidings, and thence to New Orleans, by that strange and primitive word-of-mouth wireless that carries such an unbelievable wealth of detail. It reached Buck Crepelle, where he sat at a roulette-table in a little back room in Royal Street, surly from much liquor and a run of bad luck.

He took the next train to Biloxi. Mike Baccich, master of the *Good Child,* which was now the flagship of the Crepelle lugger and schooner fleet, met him at the station, summoned by the telegram Buck had sent flashing ahead of him. Not a word spoke Crepelle, beyond his growled and surly greeting, until they stood in the back room of a little water-front saloon. Four fingers of raw liquor disappeared.

"Now," said Buck, "what's all this I heah 'bout yo' old-timehs lettin' a sma't kid conservation-agent put it all oveh yo'?"

Mike growled profane response. In it he outlined the series of arrests Fork-eye had made in rounding up the oystermen who had tried to slip across the line without reporting their cargoes to the conservation boat *Osprey,* where the tax-records were kept.

"Mebbe he was a kid once," Mike ended. "But he done growed up now, boss. Don' say much, but he's sho' a bad *hombre* to monkey with."

"I'll show yo' how bad he is," came Buck's reply, capping Mike's profanity with blue-smoking phrase. "Why, I done licked him to a standstill befo' he was dry behind the ears. Been a-givin' him all the room in the world to make a fool outa himse'f. Now he's done it. Reckon yo' done heard 'bout his war-talk when we met up down Houma way? Well, kid-talk aint nothin' to worry me. But now he done sta'ted gunnin' for me, he's sho' tryin' to trim his toenails on a buzz-saw."

"What yo' plannin', boss?" asked Mike. "Betteh go easy on that boy fo' a while."

"Go easy!" Buck's rage was mounting. "Listen, yo': Yo' made a lotta money wo'kin' with me. I'll tell yo' what I'll do. I'll bet yo' five hundred dollehs I'll go out in the *Good Child* inside o' twenty-fo' houahs an' run in all the oystehs she c'n hold."

By the table stood old Pat Barry, owner of the saloon, with a fresh round of drinks on a tray.

"I'll take you on that, Buck," said he, "if Mike don't want any of it."

"Yo' on," growled Buck. He turned to Baccich. "Luggeh ready for sailin'? Aw right. Le's go."

They headed out of Biloxi before the day was an hour older.

"Yo'-all sho' gettin' weak in the head with ol' age," Crepelle informed Mike and his crew. " 'Bout time somebody made a monkey outa this wise kid. Looks lak it's up to me."

IT was a splendid cargo of choicest oysters that the *Good Child* held. Up and down the reefs, Louisiana-side, her steel-toothed dredge had dragged all through the long hours of a sunlit South Coast day. Evening was at hand. Lavishly the brush of sunset splashed broad lines of color over the great arch of the darkening sky.

With squinting eyes Buck Crepelle circled the skyline. Some distance away to the east rode the line of Nunn buoys that marked the Mississippi border. Near them two fishermen—city folks by their khaki outfits and straw sun-helmets that are the targets of many a South Coast jest—were reeling in their lines with leisurely ease, while their boatman puttered with the gasoline engine in the stern

of their small boat, preparatory to the shoreward run. To the west loomed the irregular line that marked the opening of Elephant Pass, the tall masses of the roseau-cane shading slowly down to water-level, where the marsh ended.

"I dunno why we took the trouble to put Jim Mawgan's numbeh up on the sail," meditated Crepelle aloud. "Not a conservation-agent in sight. We could take the whole damn reef across into Mississippi with us."

He gave a farewell look around.

"Sho' goin' to have some pa'ty on ol' Pat Barry's five hundred dollehs. Takin' candy from a kid!" he grinned malevolently. "I done tol' yo' that false-alarm baby had yo' buffaloed. Head in fo' Biloxi, boys."

Now, by all right of law-observance, the *Good Child* should have headed northeast to report to the *Osprey*. But with a volley of explosions from the exhaust of her auxiliary "gazzoline," she headed straight west for the Mississippi line.

A frazzle-ended cigar in his teeth, Buck Crepelle stretched himself lazily and turned the tiller over to Mike Baccich. This was too easy.

With a sudden start he wheeled and peered westward. Over the water had echoed the whiplike crack of rapid-fire naval gun. In the swell ahead of the *Good Child's* bow, the one-pounder's steel projectile splashed, ricocheted and sank. Out from the mouth of Elephant Pass sped the nose of a low gray patrol-boat, water creaming at her bow.

IT was the *Pelican*—but a strangely transformed *Pelican*. Her fore and aft signal-masts had been unstepped, and lay flat on her decks. Her upper works were covered with strips of dull-brown burlap that had enabled her to rest concealed behind the barrier of the roseau-cane.

With swift eye Crepelle measured the distances. He could make the Mississippi line before the patrol-boat could reach him, he estimated. There, at that bobbing red buoy, the laws of Louisiana reached the end of their jurisdiction.

"Keep her straight ahead!" he called to Baccich. "They aint a-goin' to shoot into us. Good thing I had Jim Mawgan's numbeh up, afteh all."

Hoisting a competitor's number was only one of Crepelle's bag of tricks. It left the other man to do the explaining.

Nearer and nearer drew the line of those buoys past which no Louisiana conservation boat held authority. Twice again the one-pounder in the *Pelican's* bow roared its warning. Twice again the projectiles splashed close to the *Good Child*. But Crepelle was right. They were shooting to warn, not to hit.

The border-markers were close at hand.

"Swing sta'bo'd!" called Buck suddenly. "Them damn-fool city fishehs aimin' to get run down?"

Apparently they were. Their motor-skiff, its exhaust belching, had swung almost squarely across the *Good Child's* bows. With a salvo of blasphemous oaths, Crepelle cursed them as the lugger surged alongside. Then—

"Shut down that moteh, Crepelle! Yo' men, loweh away that sail befo' I cut the tackle!"

A wiry form in the despised khaki of the city fisherman had leaped lightly from the bow of the speeding skiff across the lugger's low thwarts to the deck of the *Good Child*. In the crook of its arm a rifle swayed easily. Steel-gray eyes looked at Crepelle. They were curiously crossed from a slanting scar, livid in the flesh of a puckered and sun-tanned brow.

The gasoline auxiliary faltered and died as the switch was thrown out. The great lugger sail slid crumpling to the smeared deck. The *Good Child* rocked easily in the swells, safe by a clear margin inside the Louisiana line.

"Shut up, Buck," ordered Fork-eye as Crepelle, apoplectic with rage, spouting oaths, moved toward him. "Shut up an' stand still. This aint no private war yo're fightin'. Yo're buckin' the State of Louisiana, now."

Buck shut up, with a strangled rumble of oaths.

"Come to think of it, aint nothin' I'd like betteh'n fo' yo' to sta't somethin', at that," mused Fork-eye audibly. "Good thing fo' yo' to lea'n how it feels when somebody's got th' edge on yo'. An' I got th' edge on yo', Buck, jus' lak I said I would. See that ol' flag astern?" He waved a careless arm at the *Pelican*, plowing toward them. "That's my edge on yo'—get me? An' I'm usin' it to make a li'le Sunday-school boy outa yo', or I'll break yo' an' drive yo' off'm the coast. Got yo' right wheah yo' live, Buck," he continued amiably. "So don' sta't nothin' yo' caint finish."

Crepelle's rage burst bounds again.

"Neveh sta'ted nothin' yet, I couldn't finish," he gritted. "An' I'm finishin' this, Fork-eye. Only mistake I eveh made was not polishin' yo' off when yo' was youngeh. I'll take care o' *that* befo' yo' much oldeh."

"Quit yo' foolishness, man," grinned Fork-eye happily. "Yo' know what's happenin' now? I'm towin' yo' up to N'Awlyins. An' yo' comin' along lak a li'le boy an' take yo' spankin'. You' undeh arrest this holy minute. Now yo' c'n tell it to the judge."

Alongside surged the *Pelican*. Hawsers snaked outboard, twined about the *Good Child's* bitts. Swiftly the *Pelican's* signal-masts were stepped once more, her dull brown burlap camouflage stripped and stored.

"By the way, Buck," smiled Fork-eye. "I sho' hopes the judge don't fine yo' so heavy he don't leave yo' enough to pay ol' Pat Barry that five hundred. Sambola, heah, my cook, was takin' a drink in the place when yo' made that bet."

Then, with the blue and white conservation-flag flying, with the *Good Child* bobbing astern, the *Pelican* took up the journey through Lake Borgne and the Rigolets into Lake Pontchartrain, to moor at the West End dock, where the conservation fleet made its base.

It was a bitter journey for Crepelle.

UP and down the coast sped the tale. Few loved Buck enough to soften its outlines. Though he was the center of rough groups and coarse laughter in the resorts where he bought freely of what passed for whisky, it was the surface good-fellowship that centers around the bully the wide world over. Jokes on him were too few not to be relished when they happened.

Buck Crepelle betting on his oyster-pirating, losing the bet, arrested, brought to court and fined! The South Coast rocked with mirth.

The fine and the lost bet meant nothing to Buck. But the covert grins he caught from men near him, the ridicule he sensed in the eyes of those closest to him—that rankled deep.

The man had made for himself a rough world. Now it was slipping from his grasp. The seethe of his thoughts was murderous.

"Don't be a fool, boss. Keep yo' shirt on," counseled Mike Baccich, to whom something of this simmering caldron of Crepelle's rage was revealed. "His turn this time. Yours next. Don't crowd it. Anything happens to that boy so soon afteh he put it oveh yo', folks'll be talkin'. Take yo' time."

It was wise counsel, thought Buck, though difficult. He took his time. Through the weeks that followed, his hot rage hardened into cold and deadly purpose.

FAR out on the eastern horizon a few faint streaks of pale silver-gray lightened the dense blackness of the last few moments before dawn. Fork-eye gulped the tin cup of burning black coffee that is the prelude to the day's work or play in bayou-land. His craft lay at anchor in one of the innumerable channels near the mouth of Lake Borgne, the second day out on her patrol cruise.

"Due fo' some weatheh pretty soon, Cap'," observed Estopinal. "Red in the mawnin'—"

"Reckon so." Fork-eye just then had a ham-and-egg engagement that precluded much conversation.

"Wondeh how long befo' Buck sta'ts somethin'," mused Jack. "First time I eveh knew 'at baby to take anythin' sittin' down. Specially afteh the way the bunch up an' down the coast been a-rawhidin' him eveh since yo' towed him into cou't. Reckon he's figgehin' out some devilment, Cap'?"

"Ha'd to tell, Jack." Fork-eye laughed boyishly. "Yo' neveh can figgeh on Buck 'cept that he'll try to get th' edge on yo' befo' he unlimbers, always. Likely to kick oveh the traces mos' any day now. Been quiet too long fo' his own comfort."

Cigarettes were rolled and lighted.

"We'll head oveh Elephant Pass way today," Fork-eye gave order.

Though undoubtedly weather was brewing, it was a gorgeous day. Through the clear gold of the sun-splashed air, her bow cutting the steel blue of the waves that playfully slapped at her sides, the *Pelican* surged on her way. Up and down the long line of the oyster-reefs they cruised, stopping now and then to chaff good-naturedly with the men who worked the dragging steel-teethed dredges that scooped up their living from the shallow waters.

Late in the afternoon Fork-eye lowered his field-glasses and turned to Estopinal, who had just come up from his engines.

"Look oveh yondeh," said Fork-eye quietly, handing him the glasses. " 'Bout two points oveh the port bow. See that brown cargo-boat? She's a-dredgin', an' she aint got no numbeh up. Different build from the rest of the oyster-bunch, too. First time I eveh saw her."

Keenly Jack scrutinized the craft.

"May be the first time I eveh saw that boat, though I'm not sure of that. But it aint the first time I saw the roughneck steerin' her. That ol' Hank Boulanger. He's been a-doin' Buck's dirty work up an' down the coast fo' the past five yeahs."

"Uh-huh!" Fork-eye was thinking deeply.

"Goin' to run her down fo' not havin' her numbeh up?"

"Not jus' yet. Goin' to watch her fo' a while. Mo' in this than shows topside, Jack."

Came a moment's silence.

"Oh, Jack."

"Yep."

"Buck must have somethin' up his sleeve, all right. An' this is wheah it sta'ts."

FOR a while longer Fork-eye watched the cargo-boat, a lugger-hulled craft, as her dredge dragged away in defiance of all law, since she showed no number. One by one the other luggers and schooners, their holes filled with their dredges' haul, straightened away and headed toward the *Osprey's* anchorage. Presently the strange lugger and the *Pelican* alone were left.

"Oh, Jack," Fork-eye called once more.

"Right heah, Cap."

"Engines all right fo' some fast wo'k?"

"Couldn't be betteh, Cap."

"That gazzoline in the skiff in good shape?"

"Runnin' smooth. Tried her out this mawnin'."

"Plenty gaz in the tanks, *Pelican* an' skiff both?"

"Good fo' next thihty-six houahs, Cap'."

"Fine. We'll prob'ly need it. Yo' know, Jack, I been a-watchin' this li'le strangeh pretty steady. If eve'thing was all right, he'd 'a' been full up on oysters some li'le while ago. But one man's been a-droppin' 'em ovehside, t'other side from us, fast as they've dredged 'em in. Somethin' stirrin', Jack."

"I tol' yo' to watch ol' Buck. He's got a hand in this, sure's yo' bo'n. Why not pick 'em up fo' not showin' a numbeh?"

"Give 'em a li'le rope, Jack. See if maybe they'll hang themselves. Yo' betteh stand by yo' engines fo' a quick get-away. My hunch is wo'kin' ovehtime."

AS Estopinal, hitching his oil-smeared dungarees around his hips, stepped out of the pilot-house and into the engine-room, Fork-eye pulled a key from his pocket, turned and opened a long cupboard in the wall back of the wheel.

From its oiled cloth he unwrapped one of the repeating rifles that stood stacked inside. It was speckless. Silently he tested lever-action and trigger. From a paste-board box he drew a handful of the long dull brass cartridges. Then, methodically, he filled the magazine to its limit, pumped a cartridge into the barrel, set the hammer at half-cock, and pushed a last shell into the magazine for good measure. He laid the rifle on the wall-seat beneath the cupboard, convenient to his hand.

"My hunch says this is a real showdown, this time, Buck," he murmured, his eyes fixed on the outline of the strange lugger sharply outlined in the rays of the after-noon sun.

The weather the morning's red dawn had promised was beginning to gather. Banks of clouds were rising.

From the cupboard's bottom he raised a heavy revolver, its seven-inch barrel mir-ror-like, and thrust it into the waist-band of his trousers.

"Peteh!" he called suddenly.

A deck-hand stood in the doorway.

"Get Nick to help yo'. Swing the skiff off its davits. We'll tow her astern. Fasten her with the heavy hawser. Make sho' she's tight."

And then, glasses in hand, he sat down on the steersman's high stool in the pilot-house, to wait.

The waiting was not long. Through his glass, leveled from inside the pilot-house windows, Fork-eye could see the steersman at the wheel of the lugger peering toward the *Pelican*. He could even see his lips move in unheard orders. Men sped here and there on the lugger. Up came the anchor. Up rose the big mainsail. From the stern came a feathery fluff of vapor. The gasoline auxiliary was evidently work-ing at top speed.

"The damn' fool!" Jack Estopinal's voice echoed from the *Pelican's* engine-room just aft the pilot-house, where he had been watching through an open port. "He's headin' to cross the line, Cap."

Seemingly that was exactly what the strange lugger was doing. Completely disregarding the course she should have laid for the *Osprey's* anchorage, the boat headed straight for the red line of Nunn buoys that marked the Mississippi border.

"Somethin' mo' than a straight runaway in this," thought Fork-eye.

His lips tightened. His right hand reached for the engine-room bell-cord while his left spun the wheel.

"Stand by!" and "Full Speed Ahead!" clanged close on each other's heels. Foam climbed the *Pelican's* bow. The game had opened.

"We'd betteh play accordin' to Hoyle," said Fork-eye. "All due and lawful notice."

Another signal clanged as he pulled cord. Two deck-hands, gleeful as boys, sped forward. While one took the wheel to the brief instructions "Stay right on her tail!" the other stripped the tarpaulin from the one-pounder on the forward upper deck.

Lightly out through the pilot-house window swung Fork-eye, jammed home a shell-case, set shoulder to the curved butt, and sighting quickly, pulled lanyard. Water spouted high in air alongside the fleeing boat.

"Neveh heard yo', Cap," called Estopinal laughingly.

Straight ahead plowed the lugger, utterly ignoring the shot. But she had heard.

From her side rose a small puff of smoke. Over the water sounded a whiplike crack. A rifle-bullet smacked the waves alongside the *Pelican*.

The fleeing crew was firing back!

Out past the border-buoys she surged. Then with a swinging of her boom that was like a contemptuous flirt of coat-tails at her pursuer, she was off upon another tack—and headed slantingly down inside the Louisiana line once more!

"Plumb crazy with the heat!" growled Jack Estopinal, who had left his engines for a second to peer through the pilot-house door, and saw the lugger's swinging change of course that brought her back into Louisiana jurisdiction.

"Just as crazy as the wisest ol' fox yo' eveh saw, Jack," said Fork-eye, grinning again. "Buck's plannin' a real pa'ty. I'd give a pretty to know if he's abo'd that luggeh. That ol' bird is goin' to get somethin' off his chest mighty soon, now."

Fork-eye was right.

Into the network of bayous, alligator runs and narrow laterals of the tangled nest of marshy islands between Lake Borgne and Breton Sound the lugger had bored, with the *Pelican* speeding along on her trail.

From time to time a rifle on the fleeing boat cracked. Now the *Pelican* was answering. Fork-eye was wasting no one-pounder ammunition until he knew what was developing. Steering with one hand, he sent shot after shot on its way from his revolver. He was not yet shooting to hit. The *Pelican*, he knew, would overhaul the lugger in time. And he knew they knew it.

"Th' ol' fox," flashed his thoughts. "Didn't think he had it in him to wo'k out any li'le chess-game like this. Gettin' me deep in heah wheah he can cut loose with somethin'. Now jus' what is that somethin'?"

PART of that something came sooner than he expected.

He had rounded a turn from a narrow pass into a deeper, winding channel, his eyes shifting constantly from his course to the stubby lugger-mast of his quarry as it slid along above the marshy line of the roseau. Its hull was long since lost to sight in the mass of cane thicket.

Like a bar of hot steel, something seared across his forehead. His uniform cap spun in air, peak shattered, and slapped against the side of the pilot-house. Blood trickled downward into his eyes.

A rifle-bullet, fired from the thicket on the starboard bow, had creased him neatly.

For a second his head whirled. Then he steadied himself. Instinctively he had ducked below the level of the pilot-house sills, thanking his Maker that there was a smooth stretch of straight water just ahead. With one hand he held the wheel steady. With the other he dashed the blood from his eyes, reached behind him to the wall-seat for the greasy cloth wrapping of his rifle, and with it stanched the flow of blood.

Again and again the rifle spat from ambush. On the aft deck lay Peter, bored through the chest.

"No time to stop fo' that marsh-walkin' baby," muttered Fork-eye, his head clearing. "Come afteh him again. He aint goin' far."

Once more he stood erect.

"Hurt, Cap?" It was Jack Estopinal thrusting his head through the pilot-house door. His curses volleyed as he saw the red-stained rag Fork-eye held to his head. "Do we stop an' round him up?"

"Hell, no! We get that boat first. That gun-man aint goin' far in that marsh." He spun the wheel for another hairpin curve of the channel. "Tie this rag around my head, Jack. I got to stick to the wheel in this marsh."

His eyes flashed from the course to the mast ahead.

"Leave Jules to keep his eye on yo' engines, Jack," he ordered. "Then yo' come in heah, quick!"

A shouted order from Estopinal. Nodded assent from Jules, whose long-nosed oil-can probed ceaselessly in and out the racing engines that drove the little cruiser onward. Then Jack stood once more beside the crimson-crowned figure at the wheel.

"Take that gun, Jack," said Fork-eye jerkily. "I can't give yo' the wheel. Aint a man on boa'd knows this channel enough to keep us from runnin' aground. Ol' Buck sho' slipped his head in a noose this time. Think I got his game now. Gone plumb off'm his head. Figgehs he's goin' to wipe out the whole outfit somewheah in this damned marsh an' make his get-away. Picked the most God-forsaken hole in the whole South Coast to do it in, too.

"Keep yo' eye peeled, boy. Yo' see anybody with a gun in his hands, yo' shoot—an' don' have to shoot twice."

WITH a rumble of thunder the long-threatened storm was rolling up as they sped on their twisting way. Angry red of the sunset shone against the black banks of clouds. The maze of the marsh stood sharp and distinct in the metallic light of late afternoon. Jack, leaning tensely forward, started suddenly as Fork-eye's tight-closed lips opened in a joyous whoop.

"Got him, Jack! By God, we got him!"

Estopinal peered ahead. To all seeming, the mast of the fleeing lugger had changed its relative position little. Still it rose stark and stubby behind the roseau-cane ahead—a little nearer, maybe, he thought.

"How come, Cap?"

"He jus' done turned into Blind Bayou! Cornered cold! Aint no outlet. All we got to do is block the channel. Deep marsh all around. He's got to come out same way he went in."

Down the winding water-path the *Pelican* tore. To the starboard bow, as she shot around a sharp turn, loomed an opening in the roseau-cane—a channel hardly half as wide again as the boat was long. Into the opening, with a swift spin of his wheel, Fork-eye drove the boat. Up the channel some two hundred yards they sped, and then—

Jangle after jangle on the engine-room boat sounded Fork-eye's orders. Half-speed ahead she went—half-speed astern with a grinding of gears—the starboard propeller churned the black water into foam. "Stop!" clanged the last signal.

With a swirl of muddy water the *Pelican* lost headway. There she lay, broadside on, blocking the channel.

And before her, floating in an open reach of water, lay not one boat—but two!

One was the lugger they had been chasing. The other was the *Good Child*, her mast unstepped, driven only by her gasoline auxiliary.

On her deck, cursing with a vicious stream of obscene profanity, his face horribly distorted with his rage, stood the stocky figure of Buck Crepelle.

AFTER all, the best generalship in the world depends on the subordinates for the execution of the carefully planned campaign. Buck's subordinate, evil old Hank Boulanger, had fallen down—hard.

Midway where the twisting course of Niggerhead Bayou winds its path through the desolate deep marsh, there are two openings—Blind Bayou and False-Mouth Bayou. Both, as their names indicate, are blind alleys of water ending in the depths of the shoaling marsh.

It had been Buck's plan, lurking in Blind Bayou, his mast unstepped so he was out of sight behind the cane-curtain, to wait until his decoy lugger had drawn the *Pelican* past him down the reaches of Niggerhead. Then, when the decoy had swung into False-Mouth Bayou and the *Pelican* had followed, he would close in on the rear.

Fork-eye would be caught between two fires. The storm was coming. It would not be the first time a boat had gone down on the South Coast with all on board, leaving no trace.

But Boulanger, nervous with Fork-eye's shots following him, with the *Pelican* closing in on him sooner than he had calculated, had lost his head. He had stopped long enough to post one of his crew with a rifle in the marsh ambush that had nearly cost Fork-eye his life and that had left the

deck-hand Peter dying on the aft deck of the conservation craft. The sudden flurry of that episode had for a moment confused old Hank. He had never calculated that the *Pelican* would not stop when close-range rifle-fire opened on her. In the haste of flight, himself blind with rage at Crepelle for driving him into a task he feared, he had swung his lugger into Blind Bayou, the first opening, instead of False-Mouth Bayou, the second.

Design had scheduled the *Pelican* for a combined front and rear attack. Swift chance had changed the situation. Fork-eye had his foes bottled.

Cold battle-devils glinted in the eyes of the *Pelican's* captain as he picked up his megaphone.

"Yo' game's up, Buck," he called. "Yo' comin' in alive—or yo' comin' in feet first?"

"What yo' reckon yo' goin' to do?" shouted back Buck. "Yo' got nothin' on me!"

"I don' *reckon* nothin'. I know, Buck. I'm givin' yo' two minutes to climb into yo' skiff an' come oveh heah with yo' hands in the air till we search yo'."

"Sposin' we don'? I tol' yo' yo' aint got nothin' on me!" came the defiant call.

"Got nothin' on yo', hey? Mebbe so. But yo' goin' to be one of the worst victims of circumstantial evidence in the world's history, Buck. I'd sho' hate to open up on yo' with this one-poundeh. But if yo' don' come in lak a good li'le boy, we'll blow yo' boats to matchwood."

"Got this edge yo' talkin' 'bout, have yo'? I'll come oveh an' talk it oveh with yo'."

"Yo' aint talkin' oveh anything with the State of Louisiana, Buck. Yo' see that ol' flag theah?" Fork-eye pointed to the stern of his craft, where in the half-light of the stormy sunset floated the banner of the State—the great white nesting pelican and her young on the field of blue. "That's all the edge I need with yo'. Two minutes, yo' murderin' skunk. Then yo' come the way I tol' yo', or I open fire."

Out he swung through the pilot-house windows, vaulted to the upper deck and stood at the naval rifle's breech.

Hard-boiled as he was, Crepelle normally would have thought twice about opening the ball before he had maneuvered for some slight advantage. But his whole being was subordinated to the seething rage that swamped his judgment.

His answer was a swift swoop to the deck on the *Good Child*. He rose, rifle to shoulder. His shot cracked into the evening air, now breathlessly still. Fork-eye staggered back from the one-pounder's breech, lurched, and thudded to the *Pelican's* deck.

Through his left shoulder the 30-30 had drilled. Over and over he rolled, aft along the upper deck, slid down the little stern ladder, and dived into the cabin. As he made his way through cabin and engine-room to the pilot-house, stooping low to keep from showing against the broadside ports, he heard his own rifle talking in swift staccato as Jack Estopinal worked the lever.

"Flesh-wound. That's all." He grimaced wryly. "Heah, Jules. Get out the first-aid an' bandage it tight. Keep 'em a-dodgin', Jack. I'll be with yo' in a minute."

IT was a deadlock, complete, absolute. From the two luggers rifles spat fire through the gathering dusk at anything that moved aboard the *Pelican*. Their bullets swept clean across the upper deck. Not a man could approach the one-pounder without offering himself a clear target while the faintest light lasted.

From the conservation patrol-boat came answering flashes of flame, as her men fired from behind the bow and stern corners of the deck-house. Bullets smacked and thudded on stout cypress hulls.

But not all. Three were down of the *Pelican's* scant crew. On the lugger decks men lay groaning—or in sinister silence.

His head cleared and his shoulder bandaged stiffly, Fork-eye sat on the pilot-house floor, thinking hard. Then he spoke.

"It's up to yo', Jack," said he. "Just one move, now. Slip ovehside in the skiff. Keep the *Pelican* between yo' an' Buck's outfit long's yo' can. Head back up Niggeh-head to the *Osprey* an' bring 'em back with yo'. Jules an' me, we'll hold this gang heah till hell freezes oveh."

"We Estopinals aint got the runnin'-away habit, Cap, an' yo' damn well know it," protested Jack. "Now, listen—"

"Listen, nothin'! Who's skipper on this boat? Yo' do what I'm a-tellin' yo', or I'll beat the livin' waddin' outa yo' once this shouldeh gets well again!"

Discipline is discipline.

Cursing softly and sublimely, Jack Estopinal handed over his rifle, broke out

new packets of cartridges. He slipped off his boots lest any sound reveal his movements, slid down into the skiff and shot away down Blind Bayou, crouching low.

It was well he did. Bullets sang above him as his motor's *put-put-putt* through the thickening darkness told its tale to the Crepelle crew. Its sound pulsed steadily out of hearing. That trip of Jack Estopinal's through the storm in a motor-skiff is a tale they tell still on the South Coast —an epic in itself.

BRACED in the pilot-house, his drilled shoulder hurting abominably as he fired at the flashes, Fork-eye grinned into the darkness.

"Jules," he called softly. Jules was there.

"Slip out an' try those fore-an'-aft anchor hawsers. Make sho' they're tight on the bitts."

"They were," Jules reported.

With a contented smile Fork-eye moved about the boat, firing from position after position lest the luggers might guess only two men with diminishing ammunition barred their way. He hummed a little song below his breath. His shoulder hurt hellishly. He was strangely elated.

"Jules!" he called again. That son of grease and oily waste, pumping three shots at the luggers from three different points, crept up to him.

"Tide's runnin' out, Jules. Ought to be gettin' pretty low wateh. Get back of the deck-house outside an' slip oveh the boat-hook. Tell me how deep it is."

"Tide's sho' runnin' out fast, Cap," Jules reported. "Channel's only 'bout seven feet now."

"Got a li'le time yet befo' they're able to wade oveh heah an' kick us to death," chaffed Fork-eye.

Jules grinned appreciatively. Both sent their compliments lugger-ward with a swift salvo.

"An' if they sink the ol' girl, Jules, with this low wateh she'll block the channel tight."

He glanced out aft, where in the rising wind the big blue flag snapped and crackled.

"Couldn't take her down this sunset," he said meditatively. "Seven feet in the channel, huh! Well, if they do sink her, th' ol' flag'll still fly. Got to keep th' edge on Buck Crepelle."

A bullet splintered the woodwork two inches from his head. He snapped a shot into the flash, leaped aft, and fired twice again from engine-room and cabin ports.

He could not see what the outgoing tide was bearing toward him down Blind Bayou. He could not see through the dark the bow of the *Good Child,* where Buck Crepelle lay on his stomach, his face tense and strained, glaring into the dark.

It was a lost game, Crepelle knew, the minute he heard the exhaust of the *Pelican's* skiff die away in the distance. All that was left was the get-away—that, and if possible the certainty that he had killed Fork-eye. With witnesses loose, this had grown into a matter that money and political influence could never "square." It was more than a mere water-front saloon or shrimp-platform killing.

Killing in itself was old news to him. More than once before this he had "got his man," and later, by tortuous ways, had "got away with it." But this was different. His plan had been so good, too! If that cross-bred fool of a Hank Boulanger had only steered up the right opening. His rage surged high once more.

It would have been so simple. A quick wiping out of the *Pelican's* crew, caught between cross-fires. A patrol-boat, loaded with its dead, towed out into deep water through the dark of a storm that his luggers could easily outride. Two little sticks of dynamite in the hole. They lay waiting under the hatch of the *Good Child.* All over.

He had planned it all so carefully, had taken his time, as Mike Baccich had urged. Well, the old son of a sea cook would never urge anything any more. He lay bored through the belly, by the *Good Child's* tiller.

Everything planned, down to the dynamite, even. Had some trouble getting that, so it couldn't be traced.

By God! That dynamite! Why hadn't he thought of it before? A sinister smile split his lips. Into the forehatch of the *Good Child* he crawled. A few minutes later he lay face down, in her bow.

With the ebbing of the tide there floated down toward the *Pelican* through the dark, wired to a board, the two innocent-looking brown sticks in their greasy casing. Hand over hand Buck paid out the long coil of the wire. By his side were the batteries and the connection. He *had* planned that well, he thought. The wire would just about carry to the patrol-boat.

He felt it slacken in his hand. He measured what was left uncoiled, a scant three feet, and then he laughed. His fingers closed about the batteries.

"RECKON it's mighty neah time fo' that *Osprey*-boat to come prowlin' along this away," mused Fork-eye.

He had just picked up Jules from the cabin floor. The engine-room assistant's neck was neatly perforated.

"Strikes me," said the sole survivor of the *Pelican,* "it's gettin' dark enough to sta't somethin' biggeh'n this popgun business."

Stiffly he made his way down the *Pelican's* length, firing from each porthole as he passed.

Through the stern companionway he went, stepping softly up the ladder. Crawling through the dark he made his way to the little one-pounder. His fingers sought the breach-block nervously. The naval rifle was loaded.

Crouched against the gun, he loosened the set-screws, swung the muzzle around and waited for the next flash.

"Gotta try an' puncture 'em both around the wateh-line," he thought. "Sink 'em or make 'em run into the mud till th' *Osprey* comes."

But no flash came from the two luggers. They were strangely quiet.

"Can't be they're all takin' the count. Wondeh if Buck's up to some new devilment?"

It was Buck himself who answered.

His answer came with a rending blast that lifted Fork-eye high in air and hurled him, a limp and whirling figure, crashing through the brittle ranks of roseau-cane on the bank.

THE South's greatest surgeon had been summoned from bed by the head of a State department that had the reputation of "seeing its men clear through to the other side of hell and back again."

That surgeon, after hours of work, stepped into the corridor of Hotel Dieu, the ancient New Orleans hospital where awed men had borne the shattered wreckage of a man.

"He wants to see you, Commissioner," said the surgeon to big Alexander Winthrop, who bulked huge in the half-light, as he stood, red-faced from his efforts to keep his outdoor voice down to a whisper.

"Does he pull through, Doc?"

"It's a twenty-four karat miracle—but I believe he'll make it. Got no license to live after what he's been through. Can't kill these Cajuns, though—India-rubber men."

Unaccustomed tears were running down big Alexander Winthrop's face.

"In you go," said the surgeon. "Mind, now. One minute by the watch. I'm giving the orders around here."

By the bedside stood the commissioner. Up from the pillow looked one eye, keen and blue-gray—all that showed from a scorched and bandaged face, save a mouth-opening.

The lips moved. The commissioner bent forward.

"Get Buck?"

"I'll say we got him. He swings high for this."

"*Pelican* lost?"

"Not worth repairing. 'Bout the only whole thing left on her was her flagstaff. But the wreck blocked the channel and kept 'em bottled until the *Osprey* came."

"Flag gone?"

"Hell, no. We got it down to the office as a relic. Still flying when the *Osprey* came up. Explosion pitched the staff into the mud like a flag-pole."

"Flyin', was it? Fine! Told Buck I had the edge on him."

The scorched lid closed wearily over the only visible eye.

"Time's up, Commissioner," said the nurse.

OUT in the corridor the commissioner stood with wrinkled brows. He had known many men under many circumstances. But this—

"The fighting son-of-a-gun!" said he. "The flag was flying when the *Osprey* came up! And he goes to sleep happy on that."

He looked blankly at the whitewashed wall. "Now, what's the answer to that?" he asked nobody in particular.

It was regrettable that none could tell him. For the answer lay in a book, "worn with much reading," tucked away in her Dumaine Street attic in New Orleans' Vieux Carré so many years before by old Madame Souchon.

A certain Scotch admiral of the British Navy, who made history where the Texel shoaled, could have enlightened the commissioner. But Admiral Duncan was far away in whatever salt and tarry heaven awaits the fighting men of the sea.

Strategy Hawkins Cruises

"The Spending Mood! That's the key to selling things," explains Strategy Hawkins in this very-much-worth-while business story.

By Edward Mott Woolley

YOUNG Professor T. Dexter Dodd read with deep astonishment the copy of his late grandfather's will, inclosed in a letter from the lawyers.

The old man had devised to his granddaughter Polly the home, including the mortgage. To his grandson John he gave his old horse Bones, together with the harness and such portions of the wagon as might remain at his demise. To his grandson Jim he left his silver watch and best wishes. And then:

> To my youngest grandson, T. Dexter Dodd, I leave my tent-and-awning business in my home city of Litchfield, together with the debts thereto attached. I give these most worthless of my possessions to my said grandson, T. Dexter, in view of his persistent refusal to study for the Presbyterian ministry.
>
> It is my wish that at my death he shall enter into possession of said tent-and-awning business, and after paying the debts, give the said tent-and-awning business decent burial among all the blasted hopes I have had for it and for him. . . . . I labor under no illusion, however, that he will comply with my wishes in this respect.

T. Dexter Dodd handed the letter to his wife.

"The vindictive old tyrant!" she exclaimed. "Just because you knew you weren't cut out for the ministry, he makes you the laughingstock of all Litchfield!"

Young Professor T. Dexter Dodd was not listening; in his mind had dawned an idea.

"Wait!" he said. "I may accept Granddad's proposition. By the great horn spoon, Fanny, perhaps I'll turn the laugh on Polly, John and Jim. My grandfather ran the tent-and-awning business fifty-seven years without accumulating anything except debts; but he knew nothing whatever about economics. Get me a sheet of paper."

T. Dexter Dodd thereupon wrote the following letter to Strategy Hawkins of Metropolis, whose fame had reached him in more ways than one.

> Dear Sir:
>
> I enclose copy of my grandfather's will. Want your advice.

Do you consider it possible for me to take over said business and pay off the debts? Could I, with your valued counsel, make enough to continue the business after the debts were paid?

Would you consider such course honorable in view of my late grandfather's expressed wish that I look after its obsequies?

I am twenty-eight, married, and at present assistant professor of Economics at the State University, but am discontented in the professoring business. I am willing to pay a generous contingent fee on any money I might make, but have no cash for fee now.

Here T. Dexter rubbed his temple reflectively, and finished with a grimly humorous smile:

Or could you loan me a little money for working capital?

A few days later came the reply:

My dear young man:

Your originality and insolence have taken some of the drab out of my life.

I am familiar with the tent-and-awning business, numbering among my acquaintances two men who have gone through bankruptcy after going through this business. I also know Pietro Gazzi and Sons, of whom you shall hear later.

After reading your letter a second time, I find myself pawing and champing. You have sold yourself to me. Meet me in Litchfield at noon on June 9, Prairie Hotel. Inclosed find New York draft for five hundred dollars, as a loan. I am doing this to gratify myself, not you, so no flowers.

Yes, it will be thoroughly honorable to demonstrate to your grandfather's ghost that he was a damned old cad.

WHEN T. Dexter approached the hotel in Litchfield on June 9, he saw at the curb a powerful roadster, and behind the steering-wheel was a puissant man of fifty in a dust-coat and white crush hat. His jaw, while not square, was strong, his eyes searching; his mouth, in clean-shaven setting, was friendly and humorous.

"My dear Professor!" he exclaimed, shooting out a hand as T. Dexter stood hesitating. "Don't bother to introduce yourself. I know you from the intellectual aura that preceded you. Get in and we'll run over, first, to the late tenting studio of your lamented ancestor."

"I cannot express my gratitude—" began the young man; but Hawkins got in ahead:

"The pleasure is mine. I was in the mood for a week's motor adventure when your letter came; and having satisfied myself by wire that you were really a professor of economics—"

The roadster careened around a corner. A pasteboard placard on a discouraged little frame building bore the legend:

See administrator of estate of Thaddeus Dodd, deceased. Creditors file claims at Probate Court.

"No need going inside," said Hawkins, squinting through a dusty window. "With a coat of paint and a grommeting machine, the plant will do for a few weeks. Now we'll run over to your sister Polly's and get your extra shirt. . . . . No, we'll not wait for eats. I've got a cold chicken and some pickles in the boot."

ALL that afternoon Hawkins drove like a tornado, but with such consummate skill that they got through without the assistance of an undertaker. His car was the Flying Tank.

"Until five o'clock we're just roller jaunting," he added. "No questions, Professor. And if you don't mind, we'll drop your handle astern. 'Dodd' is good enough."

At five, Hawkins slowed down on the crest of a high hill.

"Ahead of us," he observed, "you see the Lost Kingdom of my friend Alphonsus Hirk—I call him Due-bill. He is one of the two busted tent-and-awning men of whom I spoke.

"Yes, Dodd, I want you to see Due-bill's lost chance. He had a tent-and-awning business in Far Hills, where you see that cluster of tall chimneys. In three years his creditors acquired $96,742.43, face value, in due-bills bearing his name. The market value of such bills was forty-three cents."

Dodd groaned. "Yet you advise me to assume my grandfather's tent-and-awning business!" he expostulated.

"Console yourself," advised Hawkins easily, as he stepped on the accelerator. "After I show you Due-bill's forfeited empire, we'll take a run through the former pastures of my friend Tump Fish. Tump did very much better from tents and awnings than Due-bill, for his accumulation of debts was $156,241.12."

"My grandfather in fifty-seven years succeeded in getting only $1,169.29 in liabilities!" bemoaned Dodd. "He must have been some piker, Hawkins."

FOR half on hour they scouted the city of Far Hills to get a squint at the money, as Hawkins said.

"Even a yeggman locates the cash before he actually goes after it," declared the strategy man from metropolis. "The lone robber who helps himself to one hundred and twelve thousand dollars in currency on the fast express—ah, he does his market exploration in advance. The girl who marries the old millionaire drills for the cash before she promises to obey. But my friend Due-bill—no ingénue was ever more guileless in love-affairs than he in the art of locating pay dirt.

"My observers have reported a large number of workable veins of canvas money," he told Dodd. "Their estimates aggregate half a million dollars on which no mining claims have been filed to date. Due-bill wasn't a go-getter. His selling gears didn't mesh, and the Almighty had never taken off his speed-control.

"Good heavens, Dodd, many a traveler has died of thirst in the desert just because he didn't know where the water was. During the next week, boy, I'm going to wheel you around a circle of fifteen hundred miles, and if by that time you can't find out where the money is—well, I'll charge off that five-hundred-dollar loan to bad debts. Remember—for six days I shall show you how to find Hidden Money and pay a big income tax."

THEY now drove to the Far Hills hospice; and just before entering, Hawkins remarked:

"I have invited a friend here to join us on the trip. There's plenty of room for three."

Scarcely had he ceased when a young man came forward from an easy-chair in the lobby. He was tall and shy, though quite dandified, and wore tortoise-shell glasses and powder-puffed cheeks.

"Ah!" beamed Hawkins. "Professor T. Dexter Dodd, permit me to introduce my friend Mr. Alphonsus Hirk—alias Due-bill, late of the Due-bill Tent & Awning Company, deceased."

Dodd shook hands, with no little surprise at Hawkins' humorous *coup*. It was interesting to meet the man who had so naïvely extracted $96,742.43 from his creditors, without retaining any of this comfortable sum for his own pocket.

"Due-bill is no salesman," reiterated Hawkins cheerfully, "though he certainly knows how to *make* tents and awnings."

Due-bill smiled sadly, but modestly said nothing.

IT was rather hilly country they set out next morning to explore, and just before starting down a long, steep descent, Hawkins braked the Flying Tank and observed:

"I promised you, Dodd, that you should hear about Pietro Gazzi and Sons. Don't know the firm, I reckon?"

"Not guilty," returned Dodd.

"Due-bill knows about them," observed Hawkins quizzically. "The Gazzis are the big tent-and-awning concern out in the Big River region. They've got their world by the tail. Old Pietro ten years ago was a sailmaker. He drifted into my office one day, having discovered through a curious piece of enterprise that he could make money on his own account selling canvas. Pietro said to me:

" 'You tella me where da mon' hide—I go getta da mon'.'

"Ah, Pietro had the right philosophy even then. He wanted to find the people with money—wanted to locate the high-grade canvas ore.

"This hill reminded me of Pietro," recalled Hawkins. "While working in a sailmaking shop, he lived on the outskirts of Pine Tree, at the top of a hill like this. In winter it was very icy, and many cars were wrecked going down. Gazzi brought home some long strips of second-hand canvas and left his boy Vincenzo on guard.

" 'Getta da mon',' he instructed.

"That winter Vincenzo eased automobiles down the hill on the canvas carpet, at one dollar a car. The net profit for the season was four hundred dollars.

"It was in the spring that Pietro came to us. He had discovered that money could be pulled down out of the sky. All he needed was a ladder and a scaling-hook. Pietro had a brain that could climb like a monkey, dig like a prairie-dog or swim like a beaver."

Hawkins let in the clutch, and they went down the hill in second gear.

"Some men have too much tortoise-shell to their goggles and not enough focus," chuckled Hawkins, nudging Dodd.

Due-bill took off his glasses, wiped them, and put them in a case.

PRESENTLY the roadster came to a village on the edge of which lay the town auto camp. The hour was still early, and a dozen cars were there. Hawkins stopped.

"Take a good look," he said with a wave of his hand. "Due-bill never saw any money in this place; but on my suggestion Gazzi really got his start at the Pine Clearing Tourist Camp, just below his own city. It was a place just like this.

"Ah," resumed Hawkins after a contemplative pause, "in this little tourist camp, so neglected by Due-bill, you see exemplified the Strategy Doctrine of Spending Moods."

"I don't recall such a doctrine in the textbooks on economics," said Dodd rather chestily.

"No, the textbooks haven't caught up; they find it difficult to break away from the Middle Ages. Now, a knowledge of the spending mood is vital to the salesman who desires to work a territory with something more than the mind of an ant. Some salesmen are really nothing but hymenopterous insects. They are busyernhell, but never get far mentally from their anthill.

"One place where you'll always find money, Dodd, is the pocket of the tourist. The male of this species will spend five dollars while peregrinating, when he wouldn't spend ten cents at home. The female tourist will spend two dollars and sixty-seven cents as against ten cents at her own kitchen door; but as regards the female, it has been truly said: 'A thing inconstant and changeable ever is woman.' Therefore women are keenly susceptible to the strategy of selling—honest strategy, of course—designed to fertilize and cultivate their spending moods.

"It's a deep subject, Dodd—this subject of spending moods. The average man's mind works in cycles, like circular insanity. Most of the time he's sane and tight-fisted when you try to sell him anything; but if you can discover in advance when the periods of spending dementia are to occur, you have a strategic advantage."

HAWKINS made a gesture to indicate the automobile camp beside which they had stopped, and added:

"But for the moment observe the spending mood in full swing. These people are playing the great game of Drop-the-wad, alias Touring. Now, these particular folk haven't any large chunks of money aching to be spent, but so far as it goes, Dodd, it's good money—real honest-to-goodness spondoolix. Too bad you didn't bring along some canvas goods—you might extract some of this self-evident cash. Dodd, you're a theorist in highbrow economics. You've got to get down to money-in-the-fist tactics.

"Even as a professor of economics before a class in salesmanship," Hawkins went on ruthlessly, "it never occurred to you that an automobile-camp typified what you call Motivated Buying Power, though I prefer the more fanciful synonyms: Burning up the mazooma, scattering the coin, letting go of the cash, health insurance, the call of the wild, waste, heluvatime.

"During your three years as head of a tent-and-canvas company, Due-bill," asked Hawkins suddenly, turning to this silent young man, "did you ever see any immediate connection between your business and the tourist spending mood?"

"Never," confessed Due-bill dolefully.

"Gazzi was a bloodhound for sensing 'da mon',' " said Hawkins. "He set up a store tent across the way from the Pine Tree Camp, and started his canvas business. The first summer he cleaned up over two thousand dollars; and they opened a real shop in town.

"Gazzi had three other sons—Angelo, Luigi and Salvatore. The four changed their names to John, Jim, Bill and Jack, and took to Strategy selling like a bull to a bolshevik flag. Those Gazzis sold everything in canvas from clothespin-bags to circus tents. They built a tent for a circus, so big that nobody else around there could make it. Even Gazzi's shop wasn't big enough, so he built a tent to make the circus tent in."

"I don't call that Economics," doubted Dodd.

"Gazzi sold it as soon as he finished the circus job," explained Hawkins. "There was a department store in town that desired to add two stories to its building without interrupting business. Gazzi solved the problem by making over the big tent for a temporary roof."

Hawkins disembarked, and opening the luggage compartment, took out an oblong piece of heavy canvas.

"To demonstrate some of Gazzi's methods, I brought along a few odds and ends to sell," he said, to their astonishment. Then he walked over to a tourist who was just crawling out from under his car. In a minute Hawkins came back and handed Dodd a two-dollar bill.

"First money toward your gran'pop's debts," he explained. "I sold the gentleman a portable back-protector for muddy roads. He wouldn't have bought it at home. Spending mood."

They moved on, and presently Hawkins jogged his memory and remarked:

"Last summer 9,674,259 'hot dogs' were eaten at Coney Island; 12,888,777 persons —26.3 per cent of them adults—made one hundred and twenty million round trips on wooden tigers and roosters. There at Coney, Dodd, the yards of 'souvenir lace' sold at four hundred per cent above the market price to persons in the spending mood, would have reached from Medicine Hat to Tombstone.

"On one transcontinental railroad the train-butcher sold 156,999 pairs of fifty-cent amber goggles at one dollar a pair, in one season. Train-butchers live wholly on spending moods.

"Now, if you fellows in the canvas business haven't fancy enough to prognosticate and corral the mooded caprice of our great American spenders, then let your wives start rooming-houses, where you men can tend the furnace and run errands."

"I SHOULD like to include in my forthcoming 'Economic Science' a few chapters on the spending mood, my dear Hawkins," enthused Dodd as they spun along through the June diorama. "Please go on."

"Your book will gather more lucre if you name it 'Catching Spenders,' " grunted Hawkins. "Dramatize your imagination, Dodd. However, we can divide spending moods into two divisions, Regular and Erratic.

"Among the former are the moods arising from: The glad Yuletide, Marguerite's birthday, Golden Wedding, Recurrent aim of every man to own a chicken-farm, or summer home on a pickerel lake.

"Among the irregular or erratic spending moods are those connected with the following causes: Raise in salary, death of moneyed ancestors, lifted mortgage, retirement from business with the noble resolve to spend, dawning of a desire for a loftier aim in life, and willingness to let go of cash to attain it, social climbing, appendicitis, making a front, for business or social reasons, approaching matrimony —one of the great looseners of hoarded cash, old age and desire to provide during lifetime for others—rare."

"You were speaking of women a few minutes ago," reminded Dodd.

"So I was. The study of the feminine mind is a specialty. In my organization I have three research men who devote their time to it, and I hope to found the Strategy Hawkins Institute of the Female Spending Soul. Under my direction the Gazzis, for instance, experimented successfully with hand-decorated lawn screens—in conjunction, of course, with rustic seats, et cetera. But the market was confined to marriageable daughters only. The masculine lord of such establishments, though possessing plenty of kale, is always devoid of the lawn-screen mood. The Gazzis never wasted time trying to sell such stuff to Dad, but for his benefit they carried a side-line of sun dials. That is the age when the sun-dial spending mood develops.

"But when it came to painted and staidly decorated canvas office screens—ha, Dodd, the Gazzis found another vein of the spending mood, this time of the masculine gender. One of Gazzi's tall decorated screens was a whole private office.

"The little cuss in the selling game often has some advantages over the big duffer," continued Hawkins. "He can go exploring, himself, in his rattler, while the big fellow must take canned statistics. Thus to find out which farmers' wives are in line for canvas summer kitchens, you must mix with said wives."

"Canvas kitchens!" exclaimed Due-bill, with a show of enthusiasm. "I'll be damned!"

Hawkins grunted. "Look here, Due-bill, three years ago was a hard season for canvas men—eh?"

"Rotten—no canvas business in sight."

"But that spring the Gazzis sold a mile of canvas to camp colonies. It was like this: Pietro Gazzi went to Dan Campout and wife, who were getting ready to bungalow into the suburbs. Dan and his folks lived in a forty-dollar flat and paid ninety for it, but hoped to have their shanty ready by the end of October.

" 'I showa how you liva all summer in canvas house on own lot,' said Pietro. 'You paya no rent. Thisa way many man getta rich.'

"So Dan—who liked to camp, anyway —built a frame of two-by-fours, and the Gazzis did the rest. Dan's folks lived in the canvas house six months, and had the two-by-fours left.

"Meanwhile the canvas-house mood got under way, and the Gazzis sold a hundred odd jobs, together with canvas bunks, garages and whatnot. No, not much tent or awning business in sight!

"That reminds me," continued Hawkins, "how Pietro went out to the camp-meeting grounds that same spring and looked around—some months ahead of the Billy Monday revival. He had observed the preceding summer that some of the tents had as many holes as salesmen have alibis. Pietro's logic deduced spending moods in August. He had shrewdly watched the lure of the camp-meeting. Ha, the camp-meeting notch in the spending cycle brings loose cash that stays under the lid the other fifty weeks!

"In August he had a dozen tents on the grounds, for rent or sale. Camp meetings —ah, my dear young men, a salesman should know all the forms of mental exaltation that make easy markets for his goods. If Due-bill had been a student of moods, he might be at Atlantic City now and have a room and bath at the Foamers."

"WHAT'S up?" inquired Dodd as Hawkins brought the car to a stop on the outskirts of a town, and taking out a pair of binoculars, proceeded to study a rather large house two hundred feet ahead. "You act as if you'd sighted an enemy ship."

"Wrong!" objected Hawkins. "I am simply applying the Strategy Hawkins formula for spotting houses with money inside, coupled with the spending habit."

He took from his pocket a printed form, and commenced to make tally-marks.

"Of course, this method isn't infallible," he admitted; "but a salesman can usually pick the high-spots. Observe those kids playing in the yard. They are prettily dressed, and this item counts five positive points. The shrubbery wears its hair bobbed; the lawn is only eight per cent dandelions, and the flowers look naïve—six points more.

"A few paint-worn spots appear on the porch, so we put down two negative tallies. The screens are copper, which means three positives.

"Now jump to the roof. You see a few middle-aged shingles, and two bricks at the top of the chimney contemplate escape. More negatives.

"Observe in the attic windows that the muslin curtains are draped in compound cubical parabolic curves. We know the house contains a maid, indicating money or the spending mood. Twenty positives."

Hawkins reached a total of one hundred points, eighty-four of which were positives.

"Which leads you to what conclusion?" asked Dodd, his professoring instinct asserting itself. "I find nothing on maids in the theory of economics—"

"In the *application* of economics, you do," corrected Hawkins. "A housewife who has a maid has twenty-three per cent less sales-resistance than the dish-washing wife. She may not possess that much more actual buying-power, but she lets go quicker and has more credit. In selling, as well as in contemplation of the matrimonial yoke, study women, my sons.

"Now I shall attempt to sell some canvas curtains for sleeping porches. And I will bet a new hat, Dodd, that within an hour of the time you say go, I can sell four orders."

Hawkins drove up to the house with a spurt and then disappeared, a maid in cap and apron admitting him. In eleven minutes he reappeared on the porch, and they heard him say to the maid's joint mistress and serf:

"I'll send in my measure-man."

Then he called in a commanding voice: "Come on, Due-bill, and get this job right."

Handing Due-bill a tape-measure, he observed: "You'll find us at the yellow house below, maybe."

At the yellow house, however, Hawkins met a Waterloo; and also at the green, brown and white houses. His luck seemed to desert him, and Dodd reckoned his chance for the new hat. It was natural to gloat a little. The great Strategy Hawkins could be wrong!

HAWKINS' jaw was set; he said little. He no longer took time to make penciled tally-marks—he could do the thing in his head. Three times the traffic joy-killers warned him, but he merely waved to them in salute and cut the corners.

At the end of forty minutes he had made no further sales. And then he struck the three brick houses of the Butcher Brothers. The wives of the three Butchers were teaing together in the corner brick domicile, and by the close of the fifty-ninth minute Hawkins had sold all of them seclusion curtains for their outdoor Morpheus-pens, as he called them.

"It is simply the law of average—the dog-and-the-woodchuck theory," explained Hawkins, when the three were together again. "In Woodchuck County the dog may get nary a hide in three days, but on the third day he'll get three. If Due-bill had been in my place today, he'd have quit at the end of the fortieth minute and lost the bet. And he'd have set up the alibi that a fellow couldn't make any money selling gaze-protectors for slumber-porches. How about it, Due-bill?"

"You have sized me up correctly," sighed the bankrupt young gentleman, in the blackest of megrims. "I'm free to admit I'm worthless; and I don't understand why you insist on having me here on this expedition. Let me go and jump in the lake unhampered."

"Not at all!" said Hawkins with jocundity. "I brought you along for a purpose —from which you will benefit greatly. Wait until I unfold my plan, later. You will no longer think of the lake."

BY noon of the third day Hawkins and his two passengers had seen the highlights in Due-bill's late territory. The great student of strategy had thrown them where Hirk, alias Due-bill, had overlooked two hundred thousand dollars in canvas business annually.

"Speaking of overlooking business," he observed, as he turned into the Lincoln Highway and wheeled 'er up to fifty, "reminds me of a chap named Tom Hearwell—whose middle name was Look. But as I contemplate driving with some little verve until we reach Tump Fish's ex-territory, I'll refrain from any lecture performance."

That evening, in Tump Fish's home town of Tumpville,—founded by Tump the Great,—they were joined at dinner by Tump the Least, as Hawkins said, introducing him.

"Gentlemen, meet Mr. Tump Fish, and a poor fish at that! What—what say, Tump?"

Mr. Fish was a large young man with galvanized cheeks and troubled clothes. He too was badly broke—Professor Dodd pronounced it "broken."

"I was unfortunate enough to get into the tent-and-awning business," this new young man apologized, shaking hands all around. "I hope that neither of you men happen to be engaged in that line." He looked hopefully at Dodd and Due-bill.

"Dodd is planning to get into it," observed Hawkins ingenuously, "and I'm showing him the ropes. I want you to tell him all you don't know about selling canvas. Wait—don't begin now. First I'm going to tell them about Thomas Look Hearwell.

"Tom hired out to Pietro Gazzi the third year of Gazzi's reign, to sell canvas stuff to farmers. Tom had been selling flour, beans and such spiritless domestic implements at Wank's grocery, and wanted to think bigger sales thinks.

"Gazzi supplied Tom with a hand-me-down gas-buggy and a stock of goods and samples, including canvas covers for everything from hencoops to threshing machines.

"Well, Tom hadn't thought much beyond selling the stuff Gazzi laid out for him, but presently he began to see that various other kinds of money were lying hidden everywhere he went. He saw suspects among the farmers—"

"Prospects!" corrected Dodd politely.

"Suspects," reiterated Hawkins calmly. "He saw suspects in all the farmers. Old Bill Cornman wanted a power pump, by gum; Teller McTato was keen for a lighting plant for the farmhouse and barn; old Fatty DePeach was in the field for anything that would auto-intoxicate the insides of the bugs in his orchard.

"Symptoms of the spending mood! You know how the baby whimpers a little at first, just to let your wife know that the eating mood will be along presently. Moods! Gad—moods! That's one key to selling things. Locate the moods."

Dodd was making shorthand notes rapidly, for his book.

"Tom had all the markings of a rare salesbird," Hawkins went on. "He began to list all these farmer chaps, with their symptoms. That fall when he got back to Gazzi's headquarters, his commissions amounted to $2,146.63, not counting his lists. These he sold for a thousand dollars to a concern that dealt in spending-mood names for sales managers.

"Tom soon got next to the fact that he'd sold gold nuggets for the price of silver. It made him so mad that he went into the list-gathering business himself. Now he has cherry pie every time he wants it. You boys who are 'can't-be-done' artists should read the biography of Thomas Look Hearwell, which the authors in my office are preparing."

"I saw something about him last week

in the *Tribune,*" put in Fish. "Since he went into the mooding business, he's been married and divorced twice, and now—"

"Tut!" advised Hawkins. "It isn't the fault of the spending-moods that he's made so much money out of them. And as for divorces—Tump, you're getting into a wholly different field of moodishness."

NEXT day was a little wet, but the four of them took a few careens around Tumpville, Mr. Fish sitting on the floor of the roadster, his legs through the open door. Hawkins threw a strip of canvas over his shanks, remarking: "You deserve wetting, for you never used your head to capitalize the rain—did you, Tump?"

"What d'you mean, capitalize rain?" Tump demanded.

Hawkins stopped the car and sat looking at a half-finished row of brick stores. The bricklayers of course had all quit, as they do whenever the clouds sprinkle a few drops.

"I am again reminded of Gazzi," he said. "Gazzi had a peculiar habit of capitalizing everything connected with selling canvas. Instead of making raids on his creditors as you did, Tump, he dug for buried treasure wherever he found indications of it—or he got out his sky ladder.

"One rainy day while out in his gas shootabout delivering a wedding canopy at the cathedral, he observed that the thirty-odd bricklayers had hied themselves to a half-per-cent beer-hall. That month there had been ten days of wet weather! Gazzi was good at matho-gymnastics; he calculated the cost of this idleness to Bricklayers, contractor, owner.

"So Gazzi and his sons sold the idea of a portable canvas roofing; and thereafter the bricklayers couldn't find any excuse for beer-halling when the dew fell. Ah, salesmen also pry around in the corners for sad-eyed reasons not to work when the heavens rain discouragements.

"I forgot to say that the hodcarriers struck for canopies of their own, but this was easy for Gazzi.

"Bricklayers' canopies got to be the vogue in his territory," concluded Hawkins. "Gazzi sure 'gotta da mon.'" But what's the use talking to a fish?"

Hawkins was silent a minute, in pretended disgust. It was his plan to get these young men on the right plane of humility.

"I beg pardon for being a fish," said Tump presently. "A fish hasn't much brains or innards, but if I ever get a chance again, Mr. Hawkins—"

"That brings us to the point, Fish," broke in Hawkins. "Dodd wants to pay off the debts his grandfather incurred in the tent-and-awning business, and you're going to help him. So is Due-bill.

"Look here, men. Dodd will be the selling end. I have labeled him as good timber, now that he's got the Strategy bearings. Due-bill is O. K. as a measure-man, which is quite as important as selling, or your 'come-backs' will bust you up, anyhow.

"And you, Tump, can be made competent, with strict discipline on my part, to run the plant. You're hopeless at selling, but you like to make other people work." Then Hawkins reassured them:

"Yes, yes; I'll come in as silent partner and invisible manager—don't forget that! One quarter of the profits will be my fee, though I'll advance a little working capital.

"No, I'll keep my name out. We'll call the new firm Dodd, Due-bill & Fish."

"BLACK MONEY"

J. S. FLETCHER, who wrote those fascinating mystery novels, "The Middle of Things," "Ravensdene Court" and "The Inner Temple Mystery," has finished a new novel of the same type and of even greater interest which will begin in the forthcoming November issue of The Blue Book Magazine. And with it will appear some of the best work of such writers as H. Bedford-Jones, Edward Mott Woolley, Clarence Herbert New, Jonathan Brooks, Bertram Atkey, George L. Knapp and Lemuel L. De Bra. You will certainly enjoy the next, the November, issue.

WOLFSSEN

A modern werewolf appears in this unusual story by the talented author of "White Magic" and "The Earthquake."

By M. L. C. PICKTHALL

THERE is not the least occasion for you to believe this story.

Between Bonsanty and Fort o' Fear, there isn't an Indian or Eskimo who doesn't hold it as an article of faith. The beadeyed children in clean shirts and boots at the Mission know all about it. And there are quite a few white men who would say—well, they don't know; things are queer up there, anyway, and it don't seem that this is queerer than the rest, looked at as Tegner looked at it.

Tegner got the dog from an old man who lived all alone at Widgeon Lake. No one knew who this old man was—no one cared. His name was Guide. He used to go off prospecting in the summer for some wonderful copper deposits he never found; in winter he'd stay at his cabin by the lake. It was a nice cabin with two rooms. Men coming out late from the copper country by the south trail generally stopped a night with old Guide before going on to Bonsanty.

Tegner always stopped there every fall. He came to be quite a favorite of Guide's. In an obscure and silent way, the old man made the big young Northman especially welcome, and always had a pair of dry socks saved up for him when he came.

So when, some ten years back, Tegner tramped up to the cabin on a frosty night and set his hand on the door, he was surprised to find it barred—more surprised yet when he heard old Guide say, in a strange high voice: "Go away, whoever you are!"

"It's me, Daddy," said Tegner. "Let me in."

"You better go away," Guide told him. "I got the devil himself in here."

Up there, when a friend tells you that he is alone in his cabin with the devil, you don't hesitate. Tegner didn't. He

just set his shoulder to the door and broke it open. He went in, expecting some terrifying sight.

But there was only old Guide, sitting in the chair Tegner had made for him out of boxes, and staring across the room at a half-grown husky dog.

"What's wrong, old man?" said Tegner, surprised.

"That pup," answered the old fellow in the same strained voice, "that I bought off of an Injun yesterday."

"Go for you?"

"No," said Guide; "but he's goin' to."

Then Tegner looked at the dog, and his heart gave a leap. "Gee!" he said. "I never seen such a dog! And he looks gentle. You lost your nerve, old man. That's what it is. If you want him broke to the sled, I'll do it for you. You aint got your nerve. He'll be such a leader as never was."

"You c'n take him," said Guide, "and you c'n break him, and you c'n keep him, too. I don't want no more of him after such an evenin' as I've put in."

"Well, what in thunder did he *do?*"

But the old man couldn't say what the dog had done. It was just the way he looked. . . . .

Tegner made a mental note to the effect that it isn't good for old men to bide alone. When he went on to Bonsanty in the morning, the dog went too.

In a week, everyone had heard of Tegner's wonderful new sled-dog. Tegner himself, the smiling giant, was in ecstasies. Never was such a pup. He put his whole heart into the training of that dog.

He was an enormous gray beast, two-thirds wolf; he was so much wolf—so much of the inscrutable Wild—that he could not meet a man's eyes; if Tegner stared at him, he would shift from foot to foot. Tegner called him Wolf. Yet he was amiable, as such fierce cross-breds go; he was intelligent, eager, tireless, and gave promise of being a fighter. He fought his way up Tegner's team dog by dog, until he was second. Before he came to his full strength, he whipped old Skeezicks, the wise leader, and was leader in his stead. Tegner didn't want to depose Skeezicks; but when, the day after the battle, he tried to run the old dog in the lead, Skeezicks lay down. He knew his place.

All that winter Wolf was Tegner's leader. In spite of his youth, the team followed him blindly and gave no trouble. Tegner was swollen with pride. And his softer side was touched through his pride. For that great silent brute, nearly a wolf, seemed to have an affection for him; he would follow Tegner to town, wait for him there, escort him back through the woods. Cary of the Police, seeing Tegner thus escorted one moonlight night, nearly shot Wolf; Tegner said he'd have shot Cary if that had happened. He would lie across Tegner's door, or sit for hours by the stove at Tegner's side; quite quiet unless Tegner looked at him. Then would begin the slow, stealthy restlessness of the wolf. All the dog in him seemed to come out in that silent attachment to Tegner, and certainly in no other way.

THERE was absolutely no sign of danger in the brute until Tegner took sick the second winter. He and Wolf were fairly inseparable by then. The wife of a friend nursed Tegner until he was on his way to recovery; then he was left alone in his shack up the hill, except that "one of the boys" always dropped in of an evening to feed the dogs, fix the stove and have a word with Tegner.

Tegner found the days very long. He told the boys he wouldn't have known what to do without Wolf, who never left him. He would talk to Wolf for hours; and Wolf would listen with both ears pricked and his head sunken so he would not have to meet his master's eyes.

Then Tegner began to have queer impressions—dreams. It was always the same kind of dream—of Wolf suddenly rearing himself erect with both gray forepaws on the edge of the bunk, and staring into Tegner's face.

Something then happened; Tegner didn't know what—except that he would start from that dream in a sweat of unspeakable dread and stare round the shack, only to hear the stovepipe going *tick-tick* in the heat, and to see the gray shape lying patiently beside him.

Tegner got well and had no more dreams.

The third winter found Tegner and his team away up in Marrowbone country, carrying supplies from Fort o' Fear to Newsome. The story is not concerned with his work—only that it took him long distances in hard weather. Newsome was a new camp, and a store of provisions was being transported there against the expected rush for the new copper country in

the spring. Tegner was busy in this way all winter, and his team, under Wolf's leadership, never let him down.

That winter is remembered for the early and sudden thaw at the end of it. When the thaw came, Tegner was in the difficult country beyond the Marrowbone Forks. A day of high temperature, warm enough for June, stripped the wicked tilted rocks of snow as you peel fruit. The dogs had terrible work to get the sled through. Past the rocks, the snow was soft as mush. The dogs sank to the shoulder. Tegner went ahead, treading down the snow to make a trail for them. After three days of this,—short hauls and long rests,—the temperature fell. The surface froze like a sheet of delicate glass. The sled broke this surface, and the dogs' feet were cut. This troubled Tegner, who was exceedingly fond and proud of his team. He sat up half the night making boots for them. The frost held, and next day the going was much better. But they had been much delayed, and man and dogs alike were on short rations.

However, they were over the worst of it and headed for plenty. They were ravenously hungry, but miles off starvation. Then Tegner's luck again was out.

Lifting the sled over an exposed ridge, man and beasts alike at full strain, a trace broke, and Tegner fell. He fell on bare rock, and something snapped in his side like a stick. Pain made him faint a moment. He lay in the snow; and as he lay, on the borders of consciousness, he seemed to be back again in the shack, sick and dreaming—dreaming of Wolf reared up to a man's height on the edge of the bunk, and looking down at him. . . . .

His senses swung back into place. He looked. He saw Wolf, reared erect, his paws on the ridge over which the sled had passed, looking back and down.

He felt one sickening throb of pure terror as, for the first time, he stared full into Wolf's face. Then he knew.

The worst thing that can happen to a man in his position had happened. Wolf had "turned."

When the leader of your team turns on you, there is but one thing to do—shoot instantly, and shoot to kill. Tegner's revolver was mercifully in his outer pocket. He did not even draw it. He fired through the fur of his coat, and again, as the brute leaped for him. He fell short, snarled in the track, and died as he fell, his yellow eyes fixed on Tegner with an expression of —Tegner swore—implacable hate. And that hate is a thing that spreads like a flame. Tegner, very white and still, one after another shot down the rest of the raging devils that had been his dogs. He sat down in the snow and cried. Then he took what food he could carry and walked into Newsome.

He was nearly dead when he got there. In the illness that followed, he talked as if he was crazy—of his dog Wolf, and of yellow eyes and of the Devil.

WELL, Tegner went back to Bonsanty in the spring, and worked there all summer. The matter of his team passed into forgetfulness.

It was two years before he was up as far north as the Marrowbone again; and oddly enough, again his luck was out. In fact, he was walking into Newsome, which had become "quite a place," to get a grubstake from a friend he had there. Two seasons of desultory prospecting had cleaned Tegner right out. He was low in everything but his spirits—low as the temperature; and his spirits were only high because of a Government Survey map he carried, very worn and dirty, under his shirt, with a certain route on it marked in red pencil through blank white spaces. That red road was the road to fortune next year. So Tegner whistled as he tramped the last miles to Newsome under a very light pack, and a low quarter-moon.

Silvering on the heels of the evening, that moon sent a queer light along the snow. Tegner was struck by it—also by a haunting familiarity in the details of the country as he walked; he puzzled over this a little while, for it made him feel he was in some mad way retracing his steps. Then he remembered. He must be following the very same trail he followed when his dogs turned on him, two years before.

Tegner swore at the memory. It had returned so freshly and forcefully. That —why, that was the very slope he'd helped to haul the sled up, that the very ridge where he had fallen. "Under this darned snow," said Tegner aloud, "may be the very bones o' the best team ever got together." He swung up the ridge, anxious to quit the place. . . . . And a man, waiting at the top, came forward to meet him.

"Hello, mate!" said Tegner, forgetting the dogs. "Where you bound for? And what's your name?"

THE man came towards him without answering. He was a tall man, stooping from the neck. He wore rough gray furs. He looked so gaunt, so silent and wild as he approached, that Tegner took a step back. Then he spoke, in a voice that finished the start his appearance gave by being as soft as a shy woman's.

He said: "I'm bound for Newsome, mate, and not sure of the way. And my name's Wolfssen."

That was the first anybody knew of Wolfssen.

Tegner took him in to Newsome.

They talked on the way—at least, Tegner talked and the other listened. When Tegner tried to come to close quarters with him in any way, he grew uneasy and restless. Tegner learned nothing about him. But he was oddly and intensely attracted by the silent, striding, distrustful fellow who had happened into his life as suddenly as if he'd just sprouted from the ground. When they reached Newsome, Tegner led the stranger to Grainger's bar, and there, to the men assembled, he said: "This is my new partner, boys. He's such a partner as never was; he c'n whip any two of you, and his name's Wolfssen, and the drinks is on me."

Questioned, Tegner said there'd been "trouble" on the way up, after Wolfssen joined him. They met two miners, and camped with them; and the miners "got fresh," and went for Tegner, calling him square-head and worse things. "They had me down, boys, and started to kick. And Wolfssen here, he just jumped for them."

"What'd he do?"

Tegner shook his head. "Search me! It was the quickest thing I ever see. He was just in and out again, in and out again; and they was rollin' in the snow."

There was silence in the bar. It was queer how the men had bunched together, separating themselves from the great stooping figure in the gray parka who drank silently at Tegner's side. At last a thick-set fellow said truculently, "That's easy talk."

"It aint so easy to do, Maguire," said Tegner peaceably.

"That's just what I was thinkin'," agreed Maguire, still glowering at Wolfssen.

"Meanin'—"

"That your friend wouldn't be able to throw me around that way."

Thoughtfully Tegner finished his drink and wiped his mouth on the mitt hanging from his wrist. Then he said: "You willin' to let him try, Maguire?"

"Sure I am."

Tegner turned and laid his hand on Wolfssen's arm. "You show 'em, old man," he suggested. "But go easy."

Wolfssen nodded. The men swept back to the walls, leaving the floor clear. Maguire took off his outer coats and stood forward, rolling up his sleeves. He asked: "Rough and tumble?"

"Yep."

WOLFSSEN lounged out into the cleared space. He moved silently, and with that exquisite mechanical precision which in civilized man is generally restricted to the movement of the hands. He had not even thrown back the furs from his head. He slipped round the ring of men as if he were rather seeking to escape Maguire than meet him. They thought so. They laughed and jeered a little. Maguire made a run at Wolfssen, seemed to close with him. But Wolfssen eluded him with a noiseless swing and paced in the other direction. This happened two or three times. Grainger, leaning over the bar, snorted. "Aw, go in an' finish him, Maguire," he said. "He—"

He remained, mouth open, as if suddenly frozen. No man there could ever say how it happened or what was done. Only Wolfssen had suddenly turned, leaped at Maguire, struck, and leaped out again. And Maguire was down on the floor, groaning.

There was a full minute of incredulous silence—then pandemonium. At first they insisted that Wolfssen had a knife. But he hadn't. Then they tried to get Maguire to stand up to him again. But Maguire wouldn't. He was shaken, appalled. For the time his nerve was gone. "It aint the blow," he said, "it's the suddenness. Not seein' where it comes from. No, I give Tegner's friend best, boys. But it aint givin' best to a man."

"What you mean?" asked Tegner dangerously.

"By—, Tegner," said Maguire, "that's how a wolf fights! He's well named, if you ask me."

Wolfssen didn't say a word. He had another drink and went home with Tegner, who was intensely proud of him.

Wolfssen stopped on with Tegner. In a little while the two seemed inseparable.

If Tegner went in to Newsome for a good time, Wolfssen, who didn't seem to take his good times that way, would wait for him outside Grainger's and fetch him home when he was done. If Tegner stayed home, Wolfssen would sit with him patiently all evening, listening with drooped head while Tegner talked. If Tegner directed the talk too closely at him, though, he would fidget from side to side and presently go to his bunk. He made no other friends. Men feared him. There was the more subtle a flattery in his attachment to Tegner. Tegner grew very fond of him, and told him all about the road to fortune next year, and showed him the map with the red line on it.

SPRING found Tegner and Wolfssen following that red line through the white blanks of the map. Tegner had in Wolfssen an admirable companion for the trail; he was tireless, cunning in all a wanderer's ways, hard-working, imperturbable. Yet in those lonely days together Tegner began to be a little troubled. For all those qualities, it was like traveling with—

"Well," the thought flashed in Tegner's mind, "it's like traveling with an animal, for all you get *out* of him. You go to catch hold of him, and he aint *there*. You c'n see what he does. You never know what he thinks or feels. I talk to him, but there's no real answer from him. If I look at him, argue with him, try and get hold on the *inside* him, he just fades off. It's like tryin' to get hold on the inside feelin's of a husky!"

With his faithful, inscrutable companion, Tegner climbed the ranges day after day. They passed lakes and hills not marked on any map. The land was full of game; yet Tegner found it difficult to approach. They gained and crossed an unknown pass, high above the snow-line—camped beyond it, and next day struck down again into absolutely strange country, following Tegner's red-ink route to the fabled copper reef that was to be his fortune.

Tegner began to feel trail-weary, though he would have died rather than acknowledge it. During the past winter, with fortune in view, he'd had rather too many good times. And the pace which Wolfssen set would have cleaned out an Indian.

They encountered long, crumbling slopes of shale, most fatiguing on the descent for the mountaineer. After a couple of days Tegner was so blind-tired he could hardly see. Crossing one of these slopes, he stumbled, pitched forward, and rolled. He went down a hundred feet, and a few tons of loose stuff went with him. Tegner fetched up in some tree roots. The landslip he had started roared on, and spouted over the face of a cliff below the trees. Tegner was all right. But the straps of his heavy pack had burst, and all his supplies had gone over the cliff with the rest. He waited, and soon Wolfssen came and got him out. They found a way down the cliff and hunted all day for the pack, but couldn't find it. Tegner noticed that Wolfssen had a queer way of scraping at the loose earth; he used his hands and threw the stuff back, not forward. They camped on the edge of the landslide to rest Tegner.

That night, he woke from a dream. Wolfssen was standing near him, resting his hands on the log against which Tegner had sheltered himself, and looking over it at Tegner. He said, "What's the matter? Why did you yell? What was you dreamin' about?"

"*This*," gasped Tegner. "You go back to your blanket, old man, and don't come lookin' at me this way. For I don't like it."

WITHOUT a word, Wolfssen went back to his place on the other side of the log and Tegner lay and wrestled until morning with a monstrous confusion. He must have been a little fevered after his fall, for a minute he shut his eyes, he saw himself back in the shack near Bonsanty, and the wolf-dog he had shot, standing up and staring horribly into his face.

They pressed on next morning. Neither had said a word about turning back. Tegner knew that to reach the place he aimed at on half-rations would try them both to the utmost. The knowledge braced him, brought out all the best in him. He forgot his weariness in the primitive contest between manhood and suffering.

For in a few days they did suffer. Game, Tegner said afterwards, seemed to scent their coming far off and vanish. The country was abnormally barren—barren at the best of times, those slow perpetual heaves of rock, those desolate valleys of dwindling spruce. Still, there were fish in every stream, and a stream in every valley. They lived on it largely—and Teg-

ner learned that physically a white man is but a poor thing without his full allowance of flour and sweets and fats.

They went on. At last Tegner pointed to a flat-topped hill sheering gauntly like the hull of a ship above the dwindling forest. "See that?" he asked Wolfssen, his voice shaken with fatigue and excitement. "Well, that's the end of our journey one way. . . . . The copper's *there.*"

Wolfssen did not speak. He stared at the hill which was the landmark of fortune. Tegner, in his eagerness, had reached out a friendly hand to lay on his partner's shoulder. Wolfssen had avoided it with an odd sidelong swerve. "Say," said Tegner with a good-humored oath, "what's eatin' you? Can't you speak? Lately you act as wild as a—"

Something made Tegner bite his words off short. A vague benumbing uneasiness crawled like a fog over his mind. Just so would Wolf swerve in untamable distrust from a human hand. . . . . Without speaking, Wolfssen went on down the hill.

LIKE a shock of cold water, the realization of his own entire loneliness struck Tegner motionless. His partner might just as well have not been there at all; he had simply become so much a part of the impenetrable wild, in his silence, his inviolable secrecy, that he didn't count. He was separated from Tegner by something Tegner could never bridge. Tegner was in reality perfectly solitary.

With the realization of his loneliness, came the realization of another thing to Tegner.

He was afraid.

He stood a full five minutes before he followed his partner. Then he transferred something, with an unsteady hand from his pack to his pocket, and went on down the slope.

The country between them and the mountain for which they steered was the worst yet. It all but finished Tegner, but he wouldn't give in. They had hoarded their food, traveling on as little as possible with the journey back like a nightmare in Tegner's mind. They were very hungry and tired. But as Tegner said, "We're a thousand miles pegging out, old man."

He waited, half-unconsciously, for the plucky "Sure, Teg, we could go on this way all summer if we had to," which would have come from any one of his other friends. But Wolfssen was silent. When Tegner stared at him, he slid restlessly from sight.

Tegner was a little sick next day. He was weak, but the obscure strain on his nerves troubled him more. He felt as though he were journeying in a dream—a dream which had been rehearsed before.

They climbed a sharp ascent of rock, quite bare, except for dead spruce here and there, white as bones. The summit was a clean knife-edge against a space of windy blue sky. Wolfssen was ahead. He crossed the height, vanished on the other side. Tegner toiled up the last few yards, tripped on a bleached root, and fell. As he fell, he felt that he had done the same thing before—I don't mean a similar thing, but identically the same; he felt that time had moved back and repeated itself. He tried to get up. Then he found that the dead tree on whose roots he had fallen had rolled and pinned him by the leg. The leg was not badly injured, but he couldn't release himself—couldn't get any purchase on the tree to heave it off. He called Wolfssen.

THE naked silence shut in on his shout. He shouted again. Presently he heard Wolfssen coming back.

Tegner watched impatiently. The ridge of the summit was so sharp and thin that he saw Wolfssen's head rising against the blue as he climbed back, then his shoulders, then the rest of him— No! He stopped with his hands on the knife-edge of the rock, looking over it and down at Tegner.

"Say, come and get this off of me," said Tegner, impatiently, "can't you see—"

He stopped. His senses swam. An unspeakable horror held his thoughts for a moment motionless dead—as the white trunk held his body. He remained staring upward into Wolfssen's face, his face of unveiled and implacable hatred. It was shatteringly familiar. Just so, Tegner knew, had he once gazed for an endless instant into another face—read, in one rending moment, in other eyes, the meaning of their relentless and concealed spirit. . . .

Deliberately, gazing full at Tegner, and without a word, Wolfssen raised the rifle he carried.

But Tegner was before him. He had rehearsed the situation before, you see.

He did not even draw the old revolver

he carried in the pocket of his coat. He fired through the fur—and again, as with an indescribable cry, Wolfssen leaped for him. Wolfssen twisted round, sprang for the tree, and died just on the other side of it

A PARTY of Indians, traveling through that land, the next day heard the wild voice of a white man from the ridge, crying on a lagging dog-team and urging the leader: "Mush! Mush on, you Wolf, you! You wont go back on me, eh, Wolf? Mush, you Skeezicks! Mush, Wolf!" They found Tegner still pinned under the tree and raving—and his partner dead on the other side. They buried Wolfssen philosophically, and took Tegner along to Fort o' Fear.

And that version of the story which his silent, wooden-faced nurses heard from him in his sickness is the one generally accepted over several hundred miles of country—namely, that the wolf-dog he had shot "came back" as the wolf of a man with the purpose of "getting" Tegner.

In the archives at Ottawa there is an obscure paragraph in a blue report saying that an investigation was made over the death of one Wolfssen (other name unknown), which entirely exonerated Lars Tegner, his partner, from blame—in that the aforesaid Wolfssen undoubtedly attacked aforesaid Lars Tegner, probably for the sake of the provisions they carried or the copper deposit they were searching for; and that Tegner shot Wolfssen in self-defense; Tegner's story, on his recovery, being corroborated by William Many-Names, Chief John White Owl Cries, and Jimmy Running Stallion, and so forth.

But the folk, the dark, secret, simple folk of the secret lands between Bonsanty and Fort o' Fear don't read R. C. M. P. reports. And the story whispered about the fishing-stages and the little fires of the fur-hunters is quite different. Not for the lordliest *ouananiche* of the gray water, not for the blackest fox-pelt of the year, would one of those sinewy bead-eyed people cross the ridge where Wolfssen's cairn takes the level rains.

Whispering, they say that there, on clouded nights, a shadow climbs and sniffs the wind—a huge gray shadow, high-shouldered, with eyes of flame, a Wolf. . . . . But as I said, you are not under the least necessity to believe this story.

SAND

By

Rex Vancil Bixby

Just as the auto-bandit succeeded the hard-riding highwayman, so may we expect the aërial buccaneer to follow: hence this vivid novelette of sky-bandits and a brave man who fought them.

S. E. LAWLER, ESQ., leaned forward in his deep leather chair and poked thoughtfully at a particularly stubborn log in the glowing fireplace.

Fond parents had christened him "Samuel Emerson" in honor of a paternal ancestor of Revolutionary fame, but to his friends and associates, as well as to the thousands of employees of the Trans-American Aërial Express Company, of which he was president and presiding genius, S. E. stood simply for "Steel Eye."

He was loved by every man on the payrolls of the great corporation, but in every case that love was tinged with awe, and in some cases with fear. Direct, dynamic and defiant of obstacles, Lawler had, by sheer force of ability and personality, lifted himself from the comparative obscurity of a tiny village in the Catskills to his present position of wealth and eminence. The Trans-American was the child of his brain, and he had watched it grow until its air lines traversed the three Americas.

The author of this remarkable novelette has himself been an airplane pilot, and his story is therefore not only picturesque and thrilling, but authoritative as well. You will find it exceptionally enjoyable.

"Nothing risked, nothing won," had been his philosophy. Yet through all his impressive career, he had preserved the quiet, unassuming simplicity which was his heritage from the Catskills. His humblest bookkeepers called him "Steel Eye" without thought of impropriety. Fellow-officers in the two great banks which he controlled called him "Steel Eye" with diffident affection.

Of them all, but one man observed the conventional mode of address, and this exception to the free spirit of camaraderie which was a particular point of pride to Lawler, rankled him. That Jim Brierly, assistant to his chief engineer, should call him *Mr.* Lawler, savored almost of *lèse majesté,* and coupled with divers reports which had reached him, convinced him that Brierly, while a most estimable young man in other particulars, lacked the driving virility which had made his own career successful.

Like the man himself, the home of Steel Eye Lawler was big, solid, well-cared for and impressive. The den was his personal sanctuary; the rest of the house served as the fortress from which his daughter Helen, the one remaining member of his household, launched her twenty-three years of somewhat old-fashioned ideas - and unspoiled but wholly bewildering loveliness upon the ultra-modern, covertly envious and mildly disapproving ranks of Chicago's so called "smartest society."

Her sorties always resulted in a swarm of unwanted but ardent eligible males, who amused her father and vastly annoyed her. A week, however, usually sufficed for sending these aspiring Romeos upon their several ways, dazed and wondering at their own temerity.

But quiet Jim Brierly, whose ideas were quite as old fashioned and quite as wholesome as hers, had by calm persistence and the unfolding of sides of his personality hidden from others, scaled that fortress, and Steel Eye Lawler's evening game of solitaire had been interrupted by the entrance of that young man who, without preface or hesitation, stated the fact and asked the paternal blessing.

A SHOWER of sparks rose in the broad fireplace as the recalcitrant log fell into place. The dancing firelight, blending with the soft glow from the rosy shade of the single desk-light, threw weird shadows on the low, dark beams of the ceiling and brought into sharp relief the intent, eager face of the younger man and the heavy, thoughtful face of the older.

There was no sound but the crackle of the pine logs. The eyes of Steel Eye Lawler, which had been fixed on the dancing tongues of flame before him, were slowly raised to meet the intense gaze of Brierly. His voice, accompanied by a slow shaking of his head, was low as he said: "Jim, I'm sorry, but I can't say yes."

Suddenly he lifted himself from his chair and stood with head bowed. Then, moving toward the younger man, who rose to meet him, he placed a big hand on each of the lithe shoulders before him, and continued: "I like you, boy. You're clean, honest, strong." Here his eyes swept the trim, erect figure, the breadth of whose shoulders, as he touched them, belied the effect of the close-fitting tweeds. "But—but, Jim, what in hell *is* it that makes you this way? You're too meek and—and—dammit, boy, I don't say

you're a coward, but you haven't the nerve, the grit, the sand—that's it, boy. You haven't got the *sand* to stand up and fight for those that depend on you, like the man that gets my baby girl has got to. You're too—"

"That's plenty." Jim shot the words from a set jaw that would have delighted the most rabid physiognomist. It seemed to Lawler that sparks of fire glowed in the snapping dark eyes and that the close-cropped hair of the younger man fairly lifted with suppressed emotion. It was a striking tableau that stood out in the glow of the blazing logs: the older man fighting between friendship for the younger and determination that no man lacking in any essential should claim his "baby girl;" Brierly, stung to the quick by the injustice of the accusation, yet respecting the sincerity which had prompted the words.

"You accuse me of lacking sand," Jim continued, his low voice clipping off the words like the staccato bark of a machine-gun. "I'll not argue with you. You believe you're right. You're wrong. You want to be shown, eh?"

"Yes, Jim," replied the older man slowly, moved even against his judgment by the crisp decisiveness of the man before him. Could it be that he had misjudged Jim Brierly, the technically brilliant but apparently plodding and self-effacing young office man who could be and had been imposed upon in endless small ways by practically everyone in the Chicago offices of the Trans-American?

The crisp voice cut his thoughts short. "I'm not spectacular? Granted. Not demonstrative? Granted. Haven't got sand? That's unjust and untrue and I'll show you that it is.

"I've always figured it's best to keep a tight rein until emergencies come. Nerves burn out like motor-bearings. My work demands the best I have in the shop without letting everyday bickerings eat up my reserve. You'll have emergencies. So will I. When mine come, I'm going to have reserve strength and nervous energy for them.

"You've heard, among other things,"—here Brierly's voice snapped like a whip-lash,—"that I ran out of a match with MacWhorter of the Cleveland Athletic Club the other night. That I was afraid of Mac!" The short, hard laugh that followed the words was not good to hear.

With a swift movement he seized the astounded Lawler, one hand at the collar, the other at the waist, and without warning, swung his one-hundred-and-ninety-pound president and prospective father-in-law from his feet and held him poised, pale and squirming, above his head as though to cast him across the room. Then with a chuckle he placed him in his chair.

While the outraged feelings of the older man struggled for expression, Brierly's voice, now level and firm but emotionless, continued: "I just wanted to show you how absurd that idea was. I know you have heard a dozen things which tend to convince you that your assistant engineer is 'chicken-livered' and 'without sand.' Oh, I've heard them myself. I've never given them much attention, but they're every one damn' lies. And Steel Eye Lawler,"—the older man started as though struck as this familiarity fell for the first time from Jim's lips,—"I'm going to make you eat those words. I'm going to make you apologize for every sting in those accusations. I'll make you eat crow and like it. Until then," and here his voice hardened again, "I'll not—come here again. Please tell Helen for me that the next time I come back it will be to get her. Good night."

WHIRLING on his heel, Brierly strode straight from the room, snatched his hat and coat and disappeared into the still, frosty darkness of the December evening.

Back in the den of Steel Eye Lawler the firelight danced, the tiny flames revealing the figure of a well-set-up man of fifty-one or -two who sat stiffly erect on the edge of a big leather chair and who could be heard to mutter, as though to himself, the while he mopped his perspiring countenance: "Damn' cub. The nerve of him! Called me Steel Eye and then swung me around his head like a sack of peanuts."

The attentive listener might have heard, further evidencing the depths to which this gentleman had been moved, the one pet expression of Steel Eye Lawler, reserved for and used only in moments of the most profound emotion: "I'll—be—exquisitely—damned."

As Jim Brierly stepped from the Lawler curb into his low-hung and capable little roadster, he half turned toward the house and grinned the sort of grin that Horatius

must have worn as he whetted his trusty blade on the edge of his shield and shouted "Come on!" to the eager and distressingly numerous cohorts opposed to him. Still grinning, Jim carefully stroked his chin —a mannerism which was called into play only when some emergency challenged and brought to the surface the basic Irish of his nature—and remarked feelingly to the one star which had succeeded in penetrating the banks of heavy clouds: "What a corking daddy-in-law that man Steel Eye is going to be!"

JIM BRIERLY and his twin brother and inseparable chum Billy, known to all and sundry as "Bonny" by reason of his resplendent and untractable thatch of red hair, had after an unexciting but brilliant four years at Carnegie Tech., felt the call to European service.

It was characteristic of the two that they went together and fought together. The result was four years of flying at the front for Bonny, first with Guynemer's crack French escadrille and later with the First American Squadron. Out of it he came with three decorations and a record of having brought down nine enemy planes.

Jim, after two years with Bonny, had been "crashed" by three of Immelman's Red Devils, and after a crucial three months in the hospital had been invalided home. There a harassed Government, clamoring for results, had assigned him—at the request of Colonel McBride, erstwhile Dean McBride of Jim's Carnegie Tech. days and at that time Chief of Production in the Air Service—to a post of great though confidential responsibility in the production of Liberty motors. There he had added to his two field decorations an elaborately scrolled resolution of commendation and appreciation from a Congress.

Two years with the American Electric Company followed the signing of the Armistice, and then Lawler's incorporation of the great Trans-American had attracted the two brothers as a magnet draws steel. The natural ability of the two had so impressed Lawler that he had rapidly advanced them, Bonny to the position of traffic superintendent and Jim to his post as assistant engineer. Past exploits figured not at all in this advancement, as the native modesty of the two made them refrain from repeating them.

Bonny's record was, however, so conspicuous that it gradually became common knowledge, and he was made the hero of all concerned with or interested in the affairs of the Trans-American. Jim's record, however, had been less showy, and content to bask in Bonny's reflected glory, he had made no mention of his own feats.

At the Mid West Athletic Club Jim had the reputation of being the fastest and hardest-hitting boxer in the entire membership, but his refusal to enter any but practice bouts, usually against Bonny, had brought him into disfavor with the more militant—and more talkative—members. Hence the episode which had so aroused Steel Eye Lawler. Intent on his work, Jim had, however, disregarded the innuendoes of the disgruntled.

He had put his whole self into his Trans-American activities, utterly disregarding all trivialities and paying no attention to social amenities, further than his courting of Helen Lawler. To this latter he devoted himself with singleness of purpose. The result was what might be expected. He had won the heart of Helen and had acquired a reputation which decidedly estranged the *pater familias*.

FOLLOWING his illuminating remark anent the general qualification of his prospective father-in-law, Jim stepped on the starter and cleared port with a roar of the exhaust.

Passing under the corner arc, he glanced at his watch. "Eight-twenty," he mused. "By George, I'll just about have time to run out to headquarters, see the Denver Express get away and have a good talk with Bonny. Reckon I need a glance at his shining aureole to sort of orient myself." With a glance at the speedometer, he swung off across the city in the direction of the great buildings which housed the Chicago activities of the Trans-American.

While the trim little car sped through the chill night air, Brierly meditated on the happenings of the past hour. Riding alone much of the time, he had gotten into the habit of making the roadster his confidant. Now he spoke softly and feelingly to the humming motor: "Get along, Hummingbird. Time's precious to us now. I find, on second, sober thought, that it's considerable of a task to which I've committed myself. Up to me to dig up something spectacular! No bluffing will go with Steel Eye."

The big lights at the corners of the immense quadrangle which formed the landing field adjoining the headquarters buildings were now in sight, the giant silhouette of the dirigible-hangar looming up against the glare. It loomed like a transplanted pyramid, flanked by lesser pyramids, the hangars housing the Caproni, Curtiss and Wright air-cruisers.

To the left, lower than the rest, was a long dark building which, as Brierly knew, housed Bonny's newest pet, the latest model of the ultra-high powered speed monoplane designed and made famous by Hanson of New York. Jim took in the whole stark, still immensity of the view, and unconsciously his breath came faster as the bigness of it took hold of him.

IN the frosty stillness of the December night, the breath of a coming storm in the air, the discouraged stars hidden and then revealed as the cloud-billows scurried on in their endless wanderings, it seemed to Brierly that the towering shadows held the calm grandeur of Westminster or Rheims plus the tension of unseen and illimitable forces.

There was a sense of hidden power; thousands and thousands of horsepower lay there ready to spring to roaring, pulsating life at the touch of magic buttons, ready to conquer space, to annihilate distance, to defy even the elements of nature.

Jim thrilled as he had never thrilled before at the very magnitude of the Trans-American. Progress, civilization in the making, lay there; fleet couriers, intrepid pilots, all ready to trek forth through the darkness, to the ends of the continent, if need be; and he, Jim Brierly, second only to one, was responsible for the care, the constant readiness, even the development of these great leviathans. His fine figure involuntarily straightened, and the worries of the evening were lost in a quiet sense of peace.

What specific performance would satisfy Steel Eye Lawler was no clearer to him, but there was just one way in which to approach the matter. Spectacular outbursts, as such, had no place in this business. Duty should be done, but not in any spirit of bravado but of genuine service. He would—

A staccato roar from the field interrupted his thoughts, and as he turned into the driveway leading to the office entrance of the central building, he saw the giant Denver Express taxi out to the starting "T." Still impressed by the realization which had come to him a few moments before, he looked at the trim, powerful lines of the "Express" with a new interest which had something of the romantic in it. The little Spads and Nieuports of the days in France, while they had appealed to all the virile, adventurous spirit in him, had never thrilled him as did this great twin-engined Caproni. The largest of the Trans-American's ships, it and its sister ship were still the most beautiful in outline. Masterpieces of mechanical perfection, they were easier to fly than even the smaller DeH. 4's or the still smaller, faster emergency repair-ships.

A white light gleamed on the dispatcher's semaphore, and Jim caught the answering flash from the beacon reflector in the cheerfully lighted pilot's cabin as with twin exhausts streaming flame like some mythical monster, the great ship started forward and gathered momentum. The elevators flicked; the tail rose; and with a louder roar as the throttle was opened wide, the Caproni lifted. Swerving slightly and climbing as she circled, the big machine stood out in bold relief against the scudding clouds; the twinkling lights and the exultant thunder of the exhaust reminded Brierly of the alert, watchful eyes and shrill defiance of a hovering mother eagle. At an altitude of five thousand feet the great white bulk swept into the center of a dark, heavily banked nimbus, turned gracefully—and Jim knew that the pilot had banked over to his course and headed out on the long run to the metropolis of the Rockies.

Stepping into the light of the entrance arc, Brierly noticed on his sleeve a few glistening flakes of fine snow. Evidently the message of the flying clouds was accurate. "May be a tough trip on *Ninety-three,*" he thought. "Cross-wind and snow. That big bird is weather-proof, though. Whoever's up tonight better be thankful he's not in an open cockpit. Hello, what the thunder now? Running out *Ninety-four* too. Since when has traffic on the Denver run become so heavy that it takes two Capronis to handle it?"

STILL scratching his head thoughtfully, Jim pushed open the door of the Traffic Superintendent's office.

"Hello, there, Telemachus me lad!" a cheery voice greeted him. "Why the furrowed brow and thoughtful mien?" It was Denny Chapman, Bonny's assistant, speaking. Denny was, among the whole headquarters force, the one enthusiastic booster for Jim. Bonny was, of course, stanch as Gilbraltar, but Chapman was an active disciple. He worshiped Bonny, having flown under his command during the last six months of the war, and had heard enough about Jim to make him express himself without hesitation. "I don't know just what it was Jim did, but I gather he cut considerable of a swath. This no-nerve stuff is clap-trap, and I figure that he's due to show a lot of you pen-pushers up, some of these days."

"Where's Bonny?" queried Brierly.

"Gone to Denver. Big medicine, boy! Come hither and sit beside my knee whilst I spill the tale." His whole manner indicative of excitement, suppressed with difficulty, he grasped Jim's sleeve and pulled him to a chair beside his own.

JIM could only gasp his astonishment. Not since the trial trips of *Ninety-three* and *Ninety-four* had Bonny taken a service ship out. What was the idea? Chapman's eager voice continued.

"Continental National had a big shipment of bullion for the Denver Trust Company. Exactly three cold million. Absolute secrecy and everything, of course. Too much of a chance to carry passengers, so both ships went. McKetchney was to have taken *Ninety-three* and the gold, while Casey followed in *Ninety-four* with the passengers. This afternoon Ketch was taken to the hospital with acute appendicitis, and none of the other pilots being in the know, Bonny elected himself to see that the Denver people get their yellow bars safely and promptly. Talk about romance in ye bygone ages. Think of it! Shades of Roman sesterces and pirate's doudloons! Three million dollars flying through the air between here and Denver!

"Nasty weather, too! Reported eight below and still falling at Denver. Old Jamison, up at the weather station, says there's a bad low-pressure area right between Des Moines and Omaha. It looks like a big night for our mutually esteemed Bonny."

"Special guard on that sort of cargo, I suppose," remarked Jim.

"Pewee Nelson and a beautiful specimen of the genus *Shotgun*, family *Sawed-off*," was the reply. "We didn't see what could possibly happen, but Steel Eye figured he'd rather play safe. Guess he did by sending Pewee. If I wanted to start a one-man riot or revolution, that six-foot-three Swede is the man I'd send for. He can—"

HIS dissertation on the superior virtues of the fighting Swede was interrupted by a sharp pounding at the entrance door, followed by a chill blast of night air and the staggering entrance of a disheveled and all but exhausted lad of probably fifteen. The excitement under which he labored was mirrored in the staring and reddened eyes and the quivering lips. For a moment the boy leaned heavily on the edge of Chapman's desk, his breath coming in short, hard gasps, his eyes darting from one to the other of the astonished men.

"Don't lit the Myjor tyke that Dinver trip!" he suddenly burst out; then he continued jerkily, his words a mixture of cockney, rich Irish brogue and street jargon; "Oi'm Mickey Halloran. The Myjor took a likin' to me, an' got me dad to sind me to Cintral Tich High. He says he'll sind me to Carnaygie Tich if Oi mykes good. He's the bist frind Oi ever had. He'll be kilt sure if he tykes that Dinver trip."

Jim leaped to his feet and grasped the boy's shoulder. "The Major has gone. Ten minutes ago! I'm his brother. For God's sake, what's up?"

With a low cry, the lad fell forward on the desk, his slight body shaking with sobs. "Oh Myjor, Myjor, me frind!" he moaned. "Sure, an' you've been so good to me. Oh, wurra, wurra—"

Chapman produced a flask, and grasping the lad, forced it to his lips. "Here, you son of Erin, take a good swallow and give us facts. What's the trouble and how do you know it?"

The boy choked over the hot liquid, swallowed hard and dragged himself to a chair. Looking up beseechingly, he continued; "Me dad keeps a pool-hall wot used ter be a sayloon. Oi hilps there, evenin's. About an hour ago two blokes slides up to the old bar and calls for 'ginger ale wit' a dash.' When they gets about three under their belts, they begins talkin' pretty loud. There wasn't nobody there but me an' them, and they must of forgot about me. Oi wint on washin' glasses an' niver let on Oi could hear.

"They knowed about a big bunch of coin

to go to Dinver and knowed the Myjor was goin' to tyke it. There's a bunch of 'em. One of got a tip from somebody in the bank. They fixed a bloke by name of Martin here—guy that inspicts ships, they said. Two of the gang was planted by this fella Martin in the Myjor's ship, in the baggage place. One of 'em is a guy named Dixon, a kind of extra flyer out here. The other fella's a stick-up they call One-gun Riley."

At the mention of the two, Dixon and Martin, the face of Chapman set into tense lines, and Brierly's prowlike chin jutted out still farther. Both knew the fellows. Martin was an old employe of the Trans-American, and thought to be trustworthy. Dixon was a new man, a capable flyer, with a good record in a bombing squadron on the Italian front. There he had studied the big Capronis. It was probable that his coming to the Chicago headquarters, little over a month before, had been in contemplation of just such an opportunity as this.

Mickey's voice continued, now stronger and more controlled. "Oi called Peters—he's the cop on our beat—to tyke those two blokes to the station-house, an' Oi beat it here as fast as iver Oi could. Whin the Myjor gets somewhere's between Des Moines and Omaha, Dixon an' One-gun is to knock 'im out an' tyke the ship. Then they beats it for some place the guys called O'Neill, where their pals has a landin'-field picked out for 'em."

THOSE who wondered what Jim Brierly would do in an emergency should have seen him as Mickey finished his broken but eloquent recital.

Chapman, looking up with words fairly tumbling from his excited lips, was held silent by the look of calm, cold fury on the features of the assistant engineer. His whole frame taut as a bowstring, Jim stood with shoulders hunched forward menacingly, his big hands knotted until the knuckles showed white.

Back of Brierly's set, belligerent face his brain was working like lightning. His first thought was to save Bonny, his second to protect the interests of the Trans-American. It did not occur to him that it might be impossible to do either. From the instant he had begun to realize the danger, his mind had been tabulating ways and means.

That Bonny would fight was certain, but even with the able assistance of Pewee Nelson, there would be small chance for them against the other two, who would have the advantage of preparedness and surprise.

It was evident that the fellows planned to go on past Omaha to avoid suspicion, and then strike north to the open country near O'Neill, where an isolated field could be easily arranged by their confederates.

Two objectives stood out clearly in Jim's thoughts: first, to catch the speeding *Ninety-three,* second, to get inside the big Caproni's pilot-cabin and warn Bonny, or if too late, to make full settlement with those other two. There was little doubt that the conspirators had broken the radio-set on *Ninety-three* so that no warning could reach the unsuspecting Bonny.

"Denny, I need you. Can you come?" Chapman said afterward that the words reminded him of the reports of an automatic. Without hesitation he rose and silently extended his hand to Brierly. Then he sat down and in calm tones informed the night dispatcher that he would be in charge of traffic until further notice.

"Thanks. Thought I knew you," cut in Brierly. "You have the keys to Bonny's hangar? Good. Have the Hanson run out and warmed up. Get flying togs for Mickey and both of us. Dig up three automatics. I want one fifty-foot piece of inch rope and plenty of half-inch. I don't know where you get your flasks, but that one seemed to work with Mickey—so get another. That's all. Get going."

HIS eyes shining at the thought of going with these men to head off or avenge the treachery to his beloved Myjor, Mickey scurried out at the heels of Chapman, whose delight at the prospect of the trip in the wonderful swift Hanson 'plane was but slightly less than that felt by the youngster.

As they started for the door, Brierly was lost in his plans. They must try to reach Bonny before the others attacked, but the chance of doing so was remote, and a plan must be worked out to take the ship away from the two desperate men in case his arrival should be too late. Single-handed, he would stand little or no chance against the combined strength of Dixon and Riley. They must be compelled to relinquish the controls and get out of the cabin. It would not— A sudden inspiration shot through Jim's brain. He recalled

a dark, drizzly morning in Flanders, with men rushing out of their dugouts and trenches like ants before the stealthy rolling of a low-billowing cloud of pungent vapor.

That would fix them, the damn' scoundrels. He called, as Chapman reached the door:

"Oh, Denny! Put in Bonny's gas mask. It's hanging in his room at the end of the hangar."

Dropping into a chair before the astonished Chapman could reply, Brierly reached for the desk telephone and spoke rapidly for a few minutes. Hanging up, he smiled grimly. Then calling the Central Police Station, he outlined the situation as Mickey had told it to him and Chapman.

"And send down one of your best men for this fellow Martin," he concluded.

Snapping the receiver back on the hook, Brierly pressed the button connecting him with the chief inspector's office. The voice of Borden, night chief, answered immediately. "Where's Martin?" snapped Jim.

"Here beside me. Just finished clearing *Ninety-four,*" came the reply.

"Set yourself, Borden," said Brierly now evenly. "There's hell to pay. Get a good man and bring Martin here at once. Traffic office! Watch him. He may try to break away." Receiving the affirmative answer of the other man, Jim rose and strode to the door opening on the field, returned, tried the radio, then again moved to the door.

IN the light of the corner arc he could see the powerful lines of the big red Hanson. The snow was coming now in powdery gusts, but the figures of Chapman, Mickey and the mechanics were clearly visible. Only the heavy blue smoke from the warming-up gas-charge gave evidence of the pulsating life beneath the towering hood. The new patented mufflers with which Bonny had had the ship equipped almost wholly silenced the throbbing six-hundred horsepower Sampson engine.

Silently Brierly watched the preparations for the trip. He must have known that it might mean death to him; yet the thought, if it did occur to him, was instantly dismissed. His whole attention was given to his brother, roaring through the night and storm, all unconscious of the menace hovering over him. The radio had not roused him.

The realization that one of those responsible would soon be brought before him for reckoning brought an expression to his set face—an expression such as he had worn but once before, the time he had deliberately crashed his Spad head on into the leader of the group of four Fokkers which had just sent Bonny down out of control, north of Verdun. All thought of self was forgotten at that time, and it was now. That time his rush had smashed the Hun plane to kindling but the crash had sent him hurtling to the ground, his propeller gone and one wing all but smashed. He had awakened in a base hospital, where Bonny, after his splintered shoulder had mended, came to him and gave him the man-to-man hand clasp with which the brothers were wont to express their deepest personal emotions. This time it would mean safety or—

He turned as the door at the other end of the room was flung open and Borden and his aide shouldered Martin into the room. These men now saw what the Hun in the Fokker saw. The very air of the room seemed surcharged with deadly menace. Martin, thoroughly cowed, had slumped into a chair. Without a word Brierly seized him by the collar and jerked him to his feet.

"Tell what you know, and speak fast," Jim snapped. To the others he gave the single curt order: "Get out. I want this cur to myself."

Terror speaking from his whole attitude, Martin sniffled for a moment and then, as a heavy fist crashed into his right eye, cried out: "Mister, for Gawd's sake, don't! I didn't mean no harm. They gave me—"

Like a knife Brierly's voice cut through his maudlin mouthings: "So you'd send innocent men to death. You'd sell your soul for silver, would you, you Judas? Stand up and fight like a man. . . . . You dog. . . . . You're coward as well as criminal. . . . . Fight, damn you, fight."

Brierly's taunts, punctuated by stinging slaps which carried the full weight of his powerful, well-trained body, seemed finally to have awakened Martin's shrunken spirit. With a curse of rage he lunged forward, and with a cunning born of his youthful experience in the logging camps of Michigan, launched a terrible kick at Jim's knee. The crack as his toe struck was echoed by the crash of Brierly's rocklike fist against the point of the Martin chin.

IT was the finish of the encounter for Martin. Up and back over one of the big chairs he went, propelled by a blow such as but three men in all of Chicago were capable of delivering. As he fell with a hollow thud, Jim dropped into the nearest chair. Beads of cold sweat stood out on his forehead, and his ruddy complexion gave way to a drawn whiteness. Martin's trick had served him well, and Brierly knew that with a broken or dislocated knee he faced a night which would call for the best in any man.

The pain was excruciating, but there was but one thought in his mind, "Can I do it with this leg?" As the tormenting thought seared his brain, there seemed to rise before him a vision of a cheery and wholesome grin, a fiery, untractable shock of red hair, and a warm, hard handclasp. It was followed by a vision of a rugged, very sincere man of fifty-one or -two, who said something about "sand." Jim's vision cleared, and looking at the fallen Martin, a forced grin chased the lines of suffering from his mouth as he muttered: " 'Tisn't a question of can. It's—*must.*"

A draft of cold air caused him to look up. Denny and Mickey were returning, bringing his flying suit. Brushing the fine snow from them, they came across the room. "Hell of a night, Jim, old settler, but our red bird's ready to travel," announced Denny. Then, noticing the fallen figure of Martin and the tense whiteness of Jim's face: "What did he do to you, old man?" Jim pointed to his knee. "So the backwoods mucker put his brogan on you, eh?" He would have spoken his sympathy, but Brierly cut him short.

"No time for this, Denny! Get to the entrance and meet the messenger I've ordered. Rush, man! We've got to get going. Bonny has thirty-five minutes start of us now."

A look of amazement spread over Chapman's face. Denny knew gameness when he saw it; but Brierly's determination to go on with his leg in such shape, eclipsed anything in his experience. As he went to the entrance to await the messenger, leaving Jim to get into the heavy fur-lined flying-suit, he murmured feelingly in unconscious mimicry of Steel Eye, "I'll —be—exquisitely—damned!"

As Brierly finished drawing on the heavy, weather-proof "flying pajamas" and dropped into a chair, Franklin, the chief dispatcher, bustled in for his instructions. Hastily the happenings of the past forty minutes were sketched for him.

"We haven't time to wait for Lawler. You are to call him and explain matters as I have directed you," said Jim. "Have him come at once and have the officer wait here with Martin for his instructions. We'll not be able to go after the bunch near O'Neill, so have posses sent out to scour the country there and bring them in. Tell Steel Eye that if I make the grade, I'll advise him of any developments, unless they've destroyed the radio set in *Ninety-three*. I suppose they have.

"If we're successful, you will hear from me within four hours. If you don't hear within that time, get Omaha officials busy." His voice rang out while his big fist crashed on the corner of the desk. "You tell Lawler that this is my party and that I want to play a lone hand for four hours. I want to make personal settlement with those devils in *Ninety-three* at least. If I don't deliver within that time, you can prepare a flower party for me."

The dispatcher nodded understandingly. The elemental fierceness in Brierly's face and manner held him speechless. The bark of a motorcycle was heard just outside, and Chapman entered with a small nickel-plated tank to which was attached a length of rubber tubing. A look of wonder was on his face, but Jim did not stop to enlighten him.

Without a moment's hesitation he rose, and with the assistance of Mickey dragged himself to the outer door. "Get busy, Franklin," he snapped, and before that individual could collect his still startled senses, the door slammed, leaving him alone with the quiet figure of Martin.

BRIERLY hastily scanned the articles Chapman had stowed in the luggage compartment of the big Hanson. The route-map he had snatched from Bonny's desk, and it was soon fastened to the map board by the pilot's seat.

Finishing his inspection, Jim seated himself, with a "Good work, Denny. I'll take off and head out while you check up wind-direction and drift."

A nod from Chapman, and Jim's hand slowly eased the throttle lever forward. The pulsation of the big monoplane settled to a rhythmic vibration, broken only by the first few erratic skips of the tail-skid. Then, as the stick was shoved gently

forward, the tail came up and the rush of the air past the cabin windows became a steady drone.

Swiftly the Hanson gathered speed, and the drone became a whistle as though the imps of the now rapidly increasing storm were uniting in protest against the shining monster which thus flouted their fury. The throttle was shot through to the wide-open position, and with a shudder as if of dread at the terrors which lay ahead in the swirl of night and storm, the mighty Sampson motor seemed fairly to hurl the big ship from the ground. The lights of headquarters dropped away, remaining for a moment faint sparks against the dark bulk of the great buildings. Jim pulled the ship to her maximum climbing angle, and the lights swiftly disappeared. The exhaust, confined in the big mufflers, settled to an even purring, strong and untroubled, serenely defying the wind, which was now whipping the snow to a blizzard.

"Wind, fifty-four miles an hour, northwest by north; I've got the drift," said Denny, looking up from his calculations. "Let me have her now, Jim."

"Here you are. Guess I *had* better rest this leg for the main act. This rudder-bar kicks like a mule when these air-currents strike us," replied Brierly, sliding to the side seat and relinquishing the controls.

Mickey, his face glued to the cabin window beside his seat, was making the most of the novel sensations of his first flight.

For the next twenty minutes hardly a word was spoken. Denny was giving his whole attention to the task of keeping the big 'plane on the course. The erratic air-currents, buffeting and swirling, made this anything but a simple task. Brierly was busy with preparations for the crisis which the next few hours would surely bring.

With the help of Mickey he fashioned a rope sling for the small tank. This he adjusted so that it hung over his shoulder in such a way that his arms were not impeded. The rubber tube was fastened so that the end would repose safely in the big breast pocket of the flying suit. The completed rig was stowed carefully into the remaining seat, and Jim turned his attention to the gas-mask. This made ready for instant use, he looked at his watch and made some rapid calculations on the side of the map.

They were flying at an elevation of fifty-five hundred feet—five hundred feet above the regular course level for the big express ahead of them. Casey, in *Ninety-four,* was on the seventy-five hundred level tonight for safety from collision. There had been nothing to gain by advising him of the situation. He was powerless to help, and his business was to land the Trans-American's Denver passengers at their destination without mishap.

CAREFULLY Brierly checked his calculations; then in an even voice he outlined his plan of action.

"Denny, it's just ten-twenty. Bonny had practically an hour's start, as we took off at nine twenty-seven, while he left at eight-thirty. The Caproni is making a hundred miles an hour air speed and we are doing one hundred and sixty. Her broad fuselage and double wings will give her more drift than we are having but the wind was light when she started and Bonny probably gained enough then to counterbalance his present handicap. I figure he is crabbing hard to hold his course and probably hasn't more than eighty an hour ground-speed; the crabbing we are doing is holding us to about one hundred and ten. What do you think?"

"I figured us at about one hundred and ten. The difference wont upset calculations far," replied Chapman, his eyes straight to the front, for the storm was increasing and the ship was tossing fitfully.

His brows knit thoughtfully, Jim checked and rechecked every step of his figuring.

"We should catch *Ninety-three* about two hundred and ninety miles from Chicago," he announced presently. "That means an hour and forty minutes for us.

"Those chaps will probably leave *Ninety-three's* cabin lights all going to avoid suspicion when they pass Omaha and the signal station at Council Bluffs. With this wind holding us back, it's almost certain that those devils will have made their play before we reach them. We'll watch for those lights. I doubt if we can hear their engines above this wind until we get close. Mickey will take the other side. You watch the front and I'll take this side. Look down and forward.

"As soon as we sight her, you're to swing to the right and keep just behind her. Pancake down until you can just see the cabin lights. I'll put out all lights here in another twenty minutes, and with our exhaust muffled, I figure on slipping up on

them without warning. When you get that position, hold it. That clear, old man?"

"Don't you worry, Jim boy. I'll hang onto *Ninety-three's* shadow like a cootie," was Chapman's reply.

"Good. When you get there, I'm going overboard. I've fastened this heavy rope to the corner cabin brace so that it leads naturally to this window and right back of the trailing edge of this wing. The wind will probably swing me badly—and I want you, Mickey to help counteract that swinging. By pulling on the rope you can help line me up with the center of *Ninety-three's* top wing so that I can land there with some chance of staying. This snow is bad enough, but I'm almighty thankful it's not sleet.

"I might try farther out on their wing, but the sudden jolt might pitch the Caproni so much they'd get suspicious. By landing in the center, I'll be above the passenger cabin, and if they hear any noise at all, I figure it will be so mixed with the noise of their engines that it will not be particularly noticed.

"I'll be in your blind-spot, Denny, so you'll have to be guided by Mickey's signals. Edge over until I'm right above the tail of *Ninety-three* and then creep up on them. When I drop, you circle above and back. If I've made it, you follow and take your cue from my movements."

He paused for a moment—then inquired quietly: "Denny, will they have the door between the pilot and passenger-cabins shut?"

"Rather think they will, Jim," Denny replied. "Even the hardest-boiled crooks like companionship, particularly in a crisis, and I think that these birds will make the little forward cabin as snug as possible. Dixon will be at the controls, and he'll keep the other chap close to him for company. They'll figure they've nothing to worry about, and I'll bet they chum up all cozy by closing and fastening the big door."

"Thanks, old man. Sort of had it figured that way myself. But this stuff" —Jim tapped the small tank beside him— "is no respecter of persons. Phosgene, Denny! I don't want Bonny and Pewee to get any of it."

At the mention of phosgene, Chapman gave an involuntary shudder. Once he had encountered it in an offensive near Arras and the Chapman lungs were still suffering the ill effects, although the experience was five years past.

Brierly carefully examined his automatic, glanced at his watch; then, rising, he switched off the cabin lights. The only illumination was the faintly luminous glow from the faces of the altimeter, inclinometer and drift-meter.

"Peel your eyes, fellows; ten minutes should decide," was his only remark. Seated again, his eyes bent into the whirling fury of the night, Brierly quietly removed his shoes. Reaching down, he tested again the double knot he had tied at the end of the large rope, and satisfied, turned his whole attention to the task of locating the big bulk of *Ninety-three*.

If there had been an eerie element in the situation before the lights were turned off, there was a tension in the darkness that was positively uncanny. The sturdy, racing Hanson had begun to feel the strain of the raging wind and treacherous cross-currents. The creak of the straining fuselage and the cracking twang of the heavy drift-wires, like brute sinews stretched to the utmost but triumphant even in travail, seemed to mingle with the mighty hum of the Sampson's exhaust in bidding defiance to the gale.

WITH a sharp cry Jim sprang to his feet. Directly before them had risen a towering shadow in which a dozen flickers of light suddenly glowed. To Brierly it seemed that he could almost touch them, so close did they appear. The crash of the big engines of the Caproni, unmuffled, smote the ears of the three men the instant her great bulk appeared through the storm. It seemed that nothing could avert their headlong drive into the rear of the monster *Ninety-three*. What could she be doing up there when her flight level was five hundred feet below?

The flyer's instinct was dominant in Jim at that moment, and unconsciously his feet and hands moved in the one maneuver which could save them or the ship in which Bonny lay. There was no thought that he was touching none of the controls. It was what any born flyer would have done in the same situation.

As though echoing Brierly's impulse, the same instinct in Chapman acted. His hand on the stick was thrown sharply to the right, and his left foot kicked the rudder to the extreme position. The propeller-wash of the Caproni held them tossing for a moment, and it seemed that the smash was inevitable. Then like the thorough-

bred she was, the Hanson, delicately balanced as a fine watch, took the controls, and the lights of *Ninety-three* seemed to be lifted up and away by unseen hands as the monoplane swooped down in a lightning side-slip.

"Beautiful work, Denny!" breathed Jim with a sigh of relief.

"Luck!" was the other's laconic reply as he reversed the controls and brought them out on a stiff climb for altitude.

"Never saw anything prettier," Jim responded with an eloquent pat on Chapman's shoulder. "Now get up to fifty-eight hundred feet, and we'll get unlimbered for action. We can pick them up now without difficulty."

It seemed only a moment till Denny leveled off at the right elevation and the tiny lights of *Ninety-three* appeared just below and to the left of them. Against the dim light, the swirling vortex of snow behind each of the Caproni's air-screws gave eloquent testimony to the forces driving the giant passenger-ship through the night. Those vortices were the things Jim must avoid if his plans were to succeed. The bitter cold would soon numb him, and the tossing of those violently rushing streams of air would quickly incapacitate him for the strenuous work to come. In calm air it would be difficult enough to stay above them, but the bad air-pockets and cross-winds of the storm added innumerable difficulties.

Calling Mickey to his side, Jim explained the situation. The boy nodded understandingly. By this time Denny had maneuvered as agreed and had throttled down to hold the relative position of the two ships unchanged. This was barely headway for the Hanson, with its smaller wing-surface, and the most skillful manipulation was required to keep her from swinging off into a tail-spin. Chapman was justifying the faith placed in him, and Jim felt a new surge of confidence as he noticed the finesse of the other's work.

Denny's determination that he should not fail in his part of the plan was mingled with a feeling that he was seeing this big friend of his for the last time. He wanted, to speak, but his throat seemed too dry to function properly.

"Here goes, old man. Hold her steady, and wish me luck!" Jim's voice seemed to come from miles away. Glancing up, Chapman felt a hand on his shoulder and saw Brierly, the tank fastened to his shoulders and the gas-mask slung beside it, standing by the open window, through which he was pushing the rope.

"Give 'em hell for me!" was all he could say. The next moment Jim disappeared into darkness. Mickey leaned far out, his small but muscular body taut, his arms straining at the rope as Jim Brierly slowly lowered himself toward the big bulk of the Caproni.

"QUITE a lark, eh, Pewee?" Bonny Brierly called with a laugh to the elongated Swede lounging comfortably in the auxiliary seat of the pilot's cabin in *Ninety-three*. The latter, his cigar tilted at a rakish angle beneath his ample mustache, grinned appreciatively, his fingers caressing the polished stock of the capable looking shotgun lying across his knees.

"Ya! It ban fine night for us. Ay tank nobody try for get dos gold dis kind of veather," replied the veteran of the Trans-American's express guards, his prominent Adam's-apple bobbing like a monkey on a string as he yelled to make his voice audible above the turmoil of exhaust and wind.

"No danger of that, I guess," was Bonny's rejoinder. "What you did to the Stevenson crowd when they tried that hold up of fifty-seven at Memphis last month would discourage anyone against tackling this ship while you and your buckshot sprinkler are aboard."

As Bonny mentioned the Memphis trouble, Nelson's thin lips met in a sharp line and his eyes took on the look which those who had seen him in action knew to be an unfailing danger signal. Then a broad smile spread over his expansive countenance, and he replied: "A fine fracas, Bonny. Dos fella vas preddy much in earnest." He gazed contemplatively out at the storm, a thoughtful furrow between his heavy brows. It was said that he had no nerves, but some seventh sense seemed to tell him that all was not well. His thoughts were interrupted by Bonny's voice.

"Pewee, these darned cross-currents are tossing us like a cork. Nobody suspected any such storm when we started, and those boxes of bullion were put in loose. They're heavy, and if they get to sliding, they may raise the devil with the walls of the express-room. Maybe you'd better take a look around back there and fasten them down some way."

The big Swede nodded, placed his gun

carefully in the wall-bracket and opened the door leading to the passenger salon. He lurched back to the door of the express and baggage-room, bent down and entered. In the sudden darkness he did not notice the two dark shadows which drew back into the corner next to the door.

DIXON and "One-gun" Powers, his companion stowaway, had experienced sudden and well-founded misgivings when informed, just before starting, that Nelson was to accompany Brierly. Both knew his ability and were honest enough not to underrate it. They had expected some resistance from Bonny, but had counted on the suddenness of their attack to overwhelm him. The presence of the Swede was going to make things difficult.

Since leaving Chicago they had been endeavoring to work out a plan of attack entailing the minimum of risk to themselves, but had agreed on nothing, when the heavy tread and erratic thumpings of the Swede's progress toward their door informed them that there could be no further temporizing.

Holding their automatics in readiness, they crouched back into the shadows as Nelson threw the door open. As he reached for the light-switch, the barrel of Dixon's revolver crashed just behind his ear. The blow lost some of its effectiveness by reason of the big Swede's height, and while it half stunned him, it also aroused all of his fighting blood. This was his element, and he whirled, flaying out with both fists, and backing so that his assailants were in the light between him and the door.

He met the charging Powers with a swinging right which lifted the fellow clear the floor and deposited him in the corner, *hors de combat* for the time being. Dixon, sensing the inadvisability of continuing that style of combat, backed through the door, hoping to decoy Pewee into the light, where he could see to shoot. He was not disappointed.

With a roar which echoed even above the storm and thunder of the exhausts, the fighting Swede catapulted through the door, his eyes snapping, his mustache bristling with fury. Dixon, sighting swiftly, pressed the trigger of his pistol, and Nelson dropped as the big bullet tore into his groin.

The crack of another gun echoed, and Dixon felt the blow of a bullet in his left arm.

Bonny, hearing the roar of Nelson's voice as he launched himself at Dixon, had turned, snatching his pilot's .38 from its holster beside him. His one hand still on the controls, he had shot from the hip. Dixon would surely have paid the penalty for his treachery then and there, for Bonny Brierly seldom missed. The momentary turning of his attention from the controls, however, and the sudden lurch of the big ship as the right wing struck an air-pocket, diverted his aim so that the bullet, intended for the heart, struck Dixon's arm instead.

As the bandit lurched to one of the deep passenger chairs, his face white from the shock and pain, One-gun Powers, his senses again collected, took deliberate aim from the darkness of the express-room, put a bullet through Brierly's right shoulder, and as he toppled in his seat, another into his left hip.

Without the guiding hand on the controls, the great ship tossed wildly as gust after gust struck her. Powers felt instinctively that something was sadly amiss, but was powerless either to diagnose or correct the trouble. Dazedly he threw a glass of water into the face of Dixon. This roused him from the faintness due to his damaged arm, and instantly he sensed the danger. His sense of equilibrium told him that they were swinging down in a terrific glide. The Caproni, without the weight of the usual passenger-load to equalize her balance, was decidedly nose-heavy, and as Bonny's hand left the stick, she had dived down at a steep angle. Both gravity pulling and her racing engines driving her, she was gaining headway at a terrifying speed.

THE realization of the danger cleared Dixon's mind; he staggered forward to the pilot's cabin and carefully eased the stick back to the neutral position. Slowly the rush of air past the cabin windows became normal again, and he pulled the ship into a climb to the somewhat calmer air of the previous level. It was at the top of this climb that the Caproni had loomed suddenly in front of the big monoplane.

Powers brought another cup of water and held it to Dixon's lips. Refreshed, he took command of the situation. He ordered Powers to loosen Brierly's safety-belt and drag him and Nelson into the baggage-room.

"I'll lock 'em in. That Swede never

knows when he's licked," was One-gun's tribute to the fighting powers of the unconscious Pewee.

That accomplished, Powers returned to the seat beside Dixon, first closing and carefully fastening the heavy sound-proof door connecting the cabins. Dixon hurriedly took his bearings and settled to the task of holding the big Caproni on her course.

The only one not carrying serious marks of the encounter, One-gun lounged back in his seat, thoughtfully rubbing the place where the Swede's heavy swing had landed. A slight jarring of the ship caused both men to look up suddenly. "This cursed arm has about wrecked my nerves. Guess that was nothing but the wind," was Dixon's comment. Reassured, Powers sat back and inhaled deeply from a cigarette.

SUDDENLY Dixon started, and Powers scratched his nose with a tentative and inquiring finger. Powers looked up. A sullen, slow-moving cloud of dense vapor was curling just above them. Like a flash his thoughts went back to the trenches, over which that same gas had twisted and curled, bearing its message of suffering and death. Involuntarily his throat contracted, and, as the searing fumes found his lungs, he lurched forward with a cry of unspeakable anguish and horror. As he fell, there came a scream from Dixon, about whose head the terrible stuff had closed.

"O-o-h, my God! Phosgene!" he gasped, the words gurgling in his tortured throat and ending in a gasp of agony.

For a moment both men clawed first at the tightly fastened door, then, too full of suffering for aught else, at their throats. Living fire seemed to scorch their very souls. Strained, agonized gasps broke the deadly monotony of the storm. The shrieks of the wind and the rattling explosions of the racing engines seemed a ribald requiem and a derisive volley over their tortured bodies.

Outside, the storm rose to a new crescendo, and the roar of the engines mounted higher and higher as the big Caproni, left for the second time that night without a guiding hand, nosed into a steep dive. . . . . There was a tinkle of broken glass, and a sturdy form, face hidden in a grotesque mask, slid through the shattered window of the cabin and dragged itself to the controls.

JIM BRIERLY, carefully lowering himself hand over hand from the window of the big Hanson, poised there in the snow and darkness like a faithful satellite of the monster Caproni, realized that he had underestimated both the velocity of the storm and the intensity of the cold. His hands, ungloved, already felt the bite of the stinging wind, and now that he was below the sheltering windbreak of the cabin, the cold seemed to drive through to the very heart of him.

The wind made him a veritable plaything. He was blown out almost straight from the side of the Hanson, only to be dropped like a plummet as a counter-gust struck. The rope twanged above him like an overtaut harp-string.

His knee, which in the comparative quiet of the Hanson's cabin, had swelled and stiffened, was now tortured by every jerk of the rope. There was a numbness in his hands, and he knew that his grip on the rope could not be long held. This made it necessary for him to use his knees to steady himself, and the friction, as he dropped, added to the pain.

Swiftly he lowered himself. Now he was almost above the tail of the roaring *Ninety-three*—a little lower, just a little lower—what was that solid thing his toes touched? There could be nothing solid under him—nothing but a sheer drop of almost six thousand feet. . . . . There, his other foot touched it. He fought to clear his thoughts. What—what? Oh, yes. It was the knot he had tied in the rope—but why had he been so foolish as to tie it there when he still had another five or six feet to go down? Chump that he was, what had he been thinking about? He lowered his right foot and searched with his toes for the rope. Where could the darned thing be? He was getting cold. . . . . Knee seemed to be on fire in half a dozen places. . . . . Not much time to waste hunting for the rope—Bonny was down there, and Bonny needed him.

Suddenly Brierly's brain cleared. There *was* no more rope. He was down as far as he could get, and still lacked a good five feet of being on a level with the top wing of *Ninety-three*. He knew that he could not remove either hand to signal Mickey so that Denny could come lower, and at that distance, Mickey could not see what change was needed. Nothing for it, but to drop that five feet as soon as he could get above the wing.

Looking down, he was startled to see that *Ninety-three* was slipping slowly back past him—strange sort of stunt—first time he'd ever seen an airplane back up—darned funny thing that—he'd have to look into it. He glanced up, and the sight of the big Hanson poised above him brought back his sense of proportion. He realized that Denny was slowly creeping ahead, accelerating just enough to bring him gradually into position to drop.

FASCINATED, he watched the center of the big wing draw nearer. He had his eyes on the exact spot where he wanted to land—just ahead of the trailing edge and right in front of the bulging front of the big passenger cabin. He wanted that bulge to keep him from sliding off the slippery wing-surface.

Mickey was doing good work. The swirl of the propeller-wash looked uncomfortably close to Jim, but Mickey's watchfulness and his signals to Chapman had held him safely poised above the big fuselage, right where he wanted to be.

A sudden swirl of snow beat in his face, and he felt, rather than saw, the vortex of whirling snow driven back by the thrash of *Ninety-three's* air-screw rising to meet him. Then it fell away, and he found himself poised again above the body of the Caproni. Instinctively he knew that Chapman had skidded the Hanson sharply, to drag him back from the threatening danger. Heartfelt appreciation for the splendid air-work of the other welled up within Jim. If only his knee would ease up for a moment!

The humped roof of the passenger-cabin rose under him and slowly passed behind. There, right under him, was the spot on which he must drop. There would be no chance for another trial. The success of his whole plan hinged on hitting with unerring accuracy that one chosen place.

He had gathered his numbed muscles for the drop, when a sudden gust tossed the big plane, and she veered to the left. Before Mickey's signal to Denny could be acted upon, *Ninety-three* had slid over until Jim was poised directly above the giant sixteen-foot blade of the right-hand propeller. Two feet lower, and he would be drawn into that whirling death like a chip into a whirlpool. He closed his eyes. A jerk on the rope sent a spasm of pain through his knee, and he looked down. Again Chapman had saved him by a swift and abrupt stalling of the Hanson, and a gasp of thanksgiving broke from Brierly's tight lips. A moment later, and Denny, at Mickey's signal, had leveled out and skidded back until Jim was again directly over his landing-spot.

The maneuver had placed another couple of feet between him and the big wing of *Ninety-three,* but he realized that probably no better chance would come—indeed, he knew that only Providence plus wonderful work on the part of Chapman had made possible even this opportunity. With a whispered prayer for success, he dropped.

HIS feet spread wide and his hands grasping for the edge of the passenger cabin, Brierly struck the wing. He has never been able fully to understand just how he managed to stick to the cold, shining surface. Certainly it was instinct which, as the momentum of his fall skidded him to the edge of the wing, drove his clenched hand into the narrow opening of the forward ventilator-transom; but equally certainly, it was a benign Fate which, on that particular night, when no passengers were carried and no consequent need existed for the ventilation of the big back cabin, had opened that one particular transom. Without it to hold him, Jim would have shot off into the darkness below, for the icy surface offered no other hold for hand or foot.

His weakened knee had doubled under him as he struck, and he could not suppress a short, sharp cry. Faint with the pain and all but stiff with cold, he was nevertheless content for a moment to enjoy the simple fact of existence. Glancing up, he saw the hovering shadow of the monoplane drop back to a position from which Chapman could easily watch the movements of *Ninety-three.* "Good old Denny!" he thought to himself. Then his thoughts came back to the work at hand.

Carefully pulling himself forward, his chilled body hugging the smooth, rounded surface of the broad wing, Jim reached the forward edge. Steadying himself, he looked down and into the small cabin, where but a short time before Bonny had flashed his "ready" signal at the field. Hard, unreasoning anger took hold of him as he saw the tense figure of Dixon at the controls and the slouching Powers in the other.

Chilled and aching, but now sure of

success, Jim smiled grimly to himself. "The next four miles is to smoke you devils out," he thought. Taking the end of the rubber tube from the pocket of his heavy suit and reaching down to steady himself by gripping the nearest strut, he ran his right hand slowly along the edge of the forward cabin. He knew the features of the big ship as well as he knew his A. B. C.'s, and he felt confidently for the round opening of the small forward ventilator.

The metal sash was open, as he knew it would be. Fresh air was necessary in that tight compartment. Carefully he inserted the tube until it hung well within. Then, careful not to displace it, he reached for the valve of the gas-drum and opened it wide. The hiss of the gas was music to his ears, but he knew that the two inside, several feet away from the tube, would be unable to notice it until too late to save themselves. The heavy gas would envelop them almost instantly.

He removed his hand from the strut and adjusted Bonny's gas mask. Moving his body to the forward edge, then twisting his uninjured leg around the strut, Jim slid down to the lower wing, the stifled cries of the miserable pair inside causing a feeling of warmth to surge over him.

With a swing, he drove the now empty phosgene-tank through the cabin window. *Ninety-three* had already started the nose-dive he had expected, and there was no time to lose. Pulling himself up and through the opening, Brierly carefully swung himself to the floor and pushed through the deadly fumes to the controls.

It was the work of but a few moments to right the big ship. The grateful warmth of the cabin quickly thawed his numbed body. Knowing that Chapman would follow, he gave no further thought to the Hanson, but turned his attention to clearing the cabin of the phosgene-fumes. It was obvious, from a glance at the two on the floor, that no trouble was to be expected from them for hours—possibly never.

BRIERLY opened the window opposite to the one by which he had entered, and the suction through the cabin swiftly carried the fumes into the outer air. While waiting for the draft to do its work, he turned to the problem of locating Bonny and discovering his condition. It would soon be safe to open the door to the passenger-salon, but he had no one to whom he could turn over the controls.

The storm, seemingly discouraged at its failure to halt the plans of this limping figure who had defied its worst, was lessening in violence, and the Caproni was riding the subsiding air-currents easily. There was no longer the mad buffeting of cross-currents. Jim knew that the balancing gyroscopes would take care of the equilibrium of the ship if he could arrange to keep her nose up in the air during his absence. His hands still stiff, he removed the ropes which held the tank, snubbed them over the control-stick and fastened the ends to the back of the pilot's seat. With more of the rope he tied the rudder-bar into position. This would hold the ship practically on her course.

Surveying his work with a satisfied glance, Brierly pushed open the door connecting the cabins and pushed quickly through. It was not yet safe to remove the gas-mask, and so he threw open two windows in the big room. Dragging himself to the door of the express room, he threw the lock back and entered. A turn of the light-switch and he saw Bonny and Nelson, both bleeding and unconscious.

WITH a broken cry Jim knelt beside his brother and placed his ear to his heart. There was movement, though faint. With deft movements he examined the extent of Bonny's injuries. The loss of blood had been profuse, but it had now almost stopped. Jim tossed the gas-mask aside leaving it hanging from his shoulder.

Pulling from his pocket the metal flask provided by Chapman, Jim placed it to Bonny's pale lips. A swallow, and the eyelids fluttered and opened. Seeing Jim, the dull eyes brightened, and a smile lit the set features. Weakly he spoke: "How in hell did you get here?"

A wave of relief swept over Jim. If Bonny could speak, he was not so bad off. He wanted to ask all about what had happened, but the whiteness of the other told him that rest and a hospital were urgently needed, so he grinned and replied lightly: "Those chaps up front have got theirs. Me? I'm the avenging angel, and I flew here."

The wan smile on Bonny's face broadened as, feeling the movement of the ship, the full import of the words struck him. The two brothers exchanged an expressive handclasp.

Several swallows from the flask were necessary to restore Pewee to belligerent consciousness. For a moment he blinked at the light; then, recognizing Jim, he stretched forth a hand for the flask. "Hello, Yim. T'anks for the drink. Ay tank Ay better maybe have anoder von. Ay yump dose gun vunce maybe too often, eh? Ay tank maybe Ay be glad for see a doc—" His voice became a whisper and unconsciousness again mercifully took him.

"Just a second, Bonny, while I check up on the controls," called Jim. Returning after a few minutes, he let down two of the berths in the passenger cabin and hurriedly made them up. Then, gently as possible, he half lifted, half dragged Bonny into one and Nelson into the other. It was agony for Bonny, and the strain over, he sank back fainting. It was likewise agony for Jim, and it was with set teeth and shoulders bowed with sheer anguish that he half limped, half pulled himself back to the controls.

LEAVING the door open so that he could see the two bunks, he seated himself and began rapidly to take his bearings. "Good, just about ninety miles from Omaha!" he exclaimed as he finished his calculations. "Get busy, Jim, and get those men to the University Hospital there *muy pronto.*" Suiting the action to the word, he banked over slightly and straightened out on a bee-line for the Trans-American's Omaha field.

Trying the radio apparatus, he found that the instruments appeared to be uninjured. The conspirators had merely disconnected the antennæ from the body of the ship. It would not be possible, anyway, to send a message to Lawler until *Ninety-three* reached Omaha.

The mechanics could attach new antennæ while he was getting the two injured men to the hospital. Struck by a sudden inspiration, Jim looked out and back at the shadow of the faithful Hanson. *Ninety-three* was already two hours behind schedule because of the storm. The speedy red monoplane could more than make up that time and get the shipment of gold to Denver right on schedule. He would get Bonny and Nelson in the hospital, hear the verdict of the surgeons and go on with Denny and Mickey in the Hanson. He would finish Bonny's trip on time.

PRESENTLY the lights of Omaha twinkled just ahead. Council Bluffs was passed, then the sullen, eddying Missouri. Brierly quickly spotted the lights of the landing-field, and cutting his throttle, nosed the big ship down. Side-slipping carefully down, he headed in toward the landing "T," leveled off and held her steady. At the hangars and office-building he could see the bustle occasioned by this unexpected arrival, followed in a moment by the dash of the gasoline-truck toward the place where he would stop. Slowly the big ship seemingly hovering just above the snow-covered ground, he brought his stick back, and *Ninety-three* touched the field in a beautiful, jarless landing.

When the Caproni had stopped rolling, Jim limped to the door and explained the situation in a few terse sentences to the night superintendent, who had come out with the gas-truck to investigate this strange visitation. The latter scurried off to summon the ambulance and police patrol.

Passing the chief operator's desk, he left the simple telegram which Brierly had dashed off.

LAWLER, Chicago.
Ninety-three safe. Bonny and Nelson shot. Think not seriously. Will complete run with Chapman in Hanson. Turning Dixon and pal over to police. Particulars later.

JIM BRIERLY

Denny had just landed and was taxiing the big monoplane up beside the Caproni. The group of night men around the cabin of the great express were indulging in anxious questions. The superintendent had told them just enough to arouse their interest to the highest pitch.

Chapman and Mickey, having turned their ship over to three of the field-force for staking down against the wind, ran up, their voices and words almost childishly delighted as they grasped Jim's hand, chattering congratulations and asking for particulars. Brierly laughed as he waved them to silence.

"Men," he called to the group below, "get the night radio chief and have an emergency set installed in that big red bird at once. It must be ready in an hour."

The ambulance, its horn shrilling a warning to the crowd outside, came to a stop as Jim finished his directions. Gentle hands placed the two unconscious men on

its comfortable stretchers. Calling the two watchmen, one to watch the silent pair on the floor until the police arrived, the other to guard the gold until the superintendent could get a force ready to transfer it to the other ship, Brierly, assisted by Denny, climbed to the ground and into the waiting ambulance. A final instruction to have the monoplane made ready for the remainder of the trip, and they passed swiftly through the field-gate.

AT the white-corridored hospital, after Jim had seen that Bonny and the big Swede were receiving immediate and thorough treatment, he called a nurse and remarked: "If you have an extra sawbones here, Miss, I guess I'll have him look me over."

A gentleman with a very professional Vandyke appeared, and with capable fingers explored the sundry sensitive spots on Brierly's left knee. "Well, young man," he announced, "we'll get you to bed, and then—"

"Can't wait. Have to go on to Denver in an hour if Bonny's condition will permit," was the swift answer.

"I presume there is no use in attempting to dissuade you by stating that your patella is broken," remarked the surgeon.

"My brother started this trip. He can't finish it. I must," replied Jim simply.

"It will mean three to four months on crutches for you."

"Thanks. I look good on 'em," said Jim with a grin.

Temporary splints were adjusted around the throbbing knee and bandaged securely into place. A moment later the head surgeon came from the elevator. Professionally he summed up the situation. "Both men will live. Remarkable constitutions, both. Another hour would have ended the chances of the older. They are resting easily under opiates. You may see them tomorrow between three and five."

It was a light-hearted trio that climbed into the taxi at the hospital entrance and skimmed through the sleeping streets to their waiting ship. They stopped for a few minutes at the lunch-room of the main building, then went out to the waiting Hanson.

The electricians had completed their work, and the tanks of the ship had all been filled. *Ninety-three,* the transfer of the boxes of bullion having been finished, had been run into the hangar. After a swift inspection of their precious cargo, Jim signed the clearance card, and they were off on the last leg of the trip.

Denny was at the controls; Jim was enjoying a post-prandial cigar; and Mickey, his effervescent spirits running riot, was entertaining them both with his picturesque dialect. The shooting of his "Myjor" had been duly and thoroughly avenged; nothing further remained but to enjoy the trip.

"This emergency set wont carry to Chicago after we've gone much further. Guess I'd better give Steel Eye those promised particulars now," said Jim as he finished his cigar and reached for the headpiece of the newly installed radio.

It was the work of but a few moments to tune the instruments properly and call headquarters. Franklin's voice came back to him almost instantly. Brierly grinned.

"Hello, chief! Brierly speaking. Get my Omaha message? Good! Call Steel Eye, will you?" Jim winked at his companions as the great voice of Samuel Emerson Lawler boomed in his ears.

"Yes, Mr. Lawler—I mean Steel Eye. It's me all right. What? Oh, everything's fine here. Bonny and the fighting Swede are out of danger, and we're well on our way to Denver in the Hanson. . . . . Eh? Yes—yes, we're all feeling great. Lots of time on our hands, but this young Mick keeps it from hanging heavy. . . . . What? How did I get to *Ninety-three?* I may tell you about that some time. Traveled on a new road to get there—the Hemp Short Line. Ever hear of it? Oh, the other fellows? Fed them phosgene. They may get over it, and they may not. I'm not particular. Nothing else to tell. We'll stop at Omaha for an hour tomorrow on the way back, and then we're coming to Chicago as fast as this bird can travel. Wire any instructions to Denver. And tell Helen she is going to have to take her honeymoon with a husband on crutches. That's all."

Jim placed the headpiece back on the bracket, clipped another cigar and sat back contentedly.

IF any group can properly be said to be "wild-eyed," that term is undoubtedly the only one in our ordinarily adequate Queen's English which would do justice to the one girl and the four men who had for a little over two hours waited for word from Jim Brierly. In response to the dis-

patcher's phone-message, Steel Eye and Helen had at once motored from home to headquarters. A strange sight had confronted them as they entered the traffic office. Martin, a miserable figure huddled in a corner chair, gazing apathetically at the shining steel bands encircling his wrists; the blue bulk of the representative of law and order crowded into another chair a few feet distant, his eyes a silent menace to the other. The dispatcher was pacing the floor with short, nervous steps.

Franklin could add nothing to what he had already told Lawler over the phone, but the latter, with a return of his poise and authority, took command. He ordered telegrams dispatched to all points in Holt County, Nebraska, authorizing posses to scour the country for the rest of the gang, then turned his attention to Martin.

Noting the shining optic and swollen chin of the latter, Lawler nodded approvingly. "Put his mark on you before he left, eh? Good job, too. Thorough! Just as well he did it, or I might forget I'm getting to be an old man, and settle your bacon myself."

The presence of the big policeman seemed a welcome reassurance in the tense atmosphere, and he was asked to remain until some news should come from Brierly.

Helen had drawn her chair to the window overlooking the field and sat looking into the storm. But once during the seemingly interminable wait did she break down, and then Steel Eye, his own eyes suspiciously misty, comforted her clumsily.

IT was as Lawler's ninth cigar singed the edge of his closely clipped and quite unmindful mustache that the call-buzzer at the farther desk sounded. Each of the five jumped at the sound, and before it could be repeated, the dispatcher had his headpiece adjusted and was calling frantically into the transmitter. "Omaha calling," his voice quavered as he mechanically wrote down the message.

Jumping up, the simple expedient of reading it not occurring to him, he stumbled around the desk and thrust the yellow sheet into Lawler's trembling hands. One look, a fervent "Thank God," and Steel Eye Lawler caught the trembling figure of his daughter tight in his arms.

"He's done it. He's safe!" tumbled from his lips.

Leaving Helen to cry out her relief and happiness, Lawler offered his limousine to convey the officer to the police station with Martin. Returning, he instructed the dispatcher to clear up the routine messages which had collected while they were waiting, and to keep his ears open for Jim's further report. Then, gathering his now smiling daughter up in his arms like the "baby girl" he called her, he sat down to await the promised "particulars."

"Helen girl," said Lawler then, "your dad's stymied, put down for the count, completely licked."

Both father and daughter were in the highest of spirits when, after the lapse of something over an hour, the excited voice of the dispatcher aroused them. Franklin handed the headpiece to Samuel Emerson as he reached the desk. Steel Eye's big frame quivered with excitement as he poured eager questions into the instrument.

The girl's breath came faster and faster as the trend of the conversation told her what had happened during those torturing hours; and her cry, "Let me talk to him, Daddy," was interrupted as her father, a dazed expression on his face, slowly placed the headpiece back on its bracket.

"The damn' young cub cut me off!" The words were an incredulous whisper. Snatching a piece of paper, he scribbled rapidly, handed the sheet to the dispatcher with a vague "Send that at once," and rising absent-mindedly, walked slowly to the window. A broad smile spread over his big countenance and a low chuckle was audible to the two waiting at the desk. Then, for the second time that night, came that concomitant of profound emotion: "I'll—be—exquisitely—damned."

CHECKING the big red Hanson in at the Denver office exactly on scheduled time, Jim saw to the transfer of the boxes of gold which had been responsible for the history-making events of the preceding night, while Denny attended to the official details of their arrival.

As Brierly took the signed receipt from the representative of the Denver Trust Company, a messenger shoved a yellow slip into his hand. He glanced hurriedly at it and the lines of pain and weariness in his face gave way before a grin of supreme contentment. The message ran,

JIM BRIERLY,
Trans-American office,
Denver.
When I lose, I pay. Helen says hurry.
STEEL EYE LAWLER.

Devil Mist

A new story of Dr. Dill, the American power in Siam —and of a young man who heard the East a-callin' all too clearly. One of Mr. Worts' most unusual stories.

By George F. Worts

THE beaten-silver inscription on the sapan-wood plaque was dusted regularly by the gently flapping punka above Dr. Dill's desk. It had never occurred to him that the verse from one of Rudyard Kipling's poems which was wrought there had any bearing upon his own Oriental personality. A Bangkok silversmith had been starving for lack of work, and Dr. Dill had, in the name of charity, commissioned him to make the plaque. The Doctor's selection of a fitting inscription had been haphazard. He was not a lover of poetry; but a certain delicate humor in the first verse of "The Two-Sided Man" had happened at the moment to appeal to him.

Much I owe to the Land that grew—
More to the Life that fed—
But most to Allah, who gave me two
Separate sides to my head.

After paying the silversmith liberally for a task that had been inspired by love, the Doctor dismissed it from his thoughts. He did not realize that he was himself a two-sided individual—that, like the celebrated little girl in the old jingle, when he chose to be good he was positively benevolent, and when he elected to be bad, he was not only horrid but diabolical. Forty-five years in the Far East had enabled the retired surgeon to accumulate not only one of the largest fortunes in Asia but a fund of occult Oriental knowledge and an acquaintance among men of all levels, from maharajas to the lowest caste Hindus, which made him tremendously powerful. He applied this power with a nice regard for his own sense of justice. If he approved of you, you were helped in many unexplainable ways; and if he had reasons to dislike you, you were unfortunate.

But it never occurred to the Doctor that he was a two-sided man, and that he sometimes rewarded good and punished evil without due consideration to the merits or demerits of the case. He was old, nearly old enough to understand youth and

the complicated emotions that can carry youth through such amazing adventures. He believed that so much inscrutable power must have been given to him for a purpose, and if he posed as a benevolent or a destructve deity, it was only because he believed that that right had been placed divinely in his hands. When he meddled with Julius Prine's destiny, it was only because he had the good of the young man at heart.

He believed that Julius Prine was a brilliant young man, a genius, but that he did not know his own mind, that he lacked a balance-wheel, and that Miss Jessica Bowman was admirably equipped to supply that want.

JULIUS was a chemist, a specialist in wood oils and the derivatives therefrom, and Jessica was a young and pretty girl who happened to be the niece of Randolph Bowman, who owned a string of rubber estates down Penang way.

Jessica was visiting a daughter of the American consul when Dr. Dill chanced to see her and Julius dancing together one night at the Sports Club. The little that had happened so far was purest coincidence; but all that happened thenceforward was calculated nicely.

The Doctor watched them dancing together; he watched them talking together on the moonlit club veranda afterward, and—the game was on! Previous experiences had taught him that the laws of young love are full of strange contradictions, and he proceeded with the greatest caution. Inquiries furnished him with the information that Jessica, as well as being young and pretty, had a sensible head upon her lovely shoulders. She was sane and steady and cool. Julius, while apparently sane, was inclined to be reckless and hot-headed.

Julius had been sent out to Bangkok in response to a request from Dr. Dill to his New York representative for a chemist, a young one with a leaning toward the organic branch of that science. He realized that a fortune was waiting for the man who would systematically classify and tabulate the oil-bearing trees of Siam. The Doctor intended to be that man, to foster and promote the hitherto unexploited wood-oil industry of this remarkable country.

It had seemed from the very beginning that Julius Prine was the man he wanted —the man who would some day assume complete charge of that work. Julius was absorbed by it; but by and by he began to be absorbed by something else, a malignant something that the Doctor was extremely desirous of correcting before it progressed too far.

Most young men who live in the Oriental tropics are exposed to the corrupting influence that endangered Julius Prine. It cannot be described in a few simple words, for it is a nameless something that hovers over river and jungle and *kampong* alike. It is, if you will, the spirit of the jungle, or the spirit of the East; and its perilous presence is expressed most fully by the creeping, miasmatic mists—the devil mists —which befoul the green and sluggish rivers. It oozes out of the mud-banks, from the mangrove tentacles, before the sun is gone, a milky, treacherous atmosphere. It is the keynote of the places that Julius Prine, in the course of his researches, was called upon to visit.

Prine had never dreamed of such jungles or such barbarism. The brilliant temples, the shocking customs, the swiftness of decay, the cheapness of life and virtue were bound to strike the young man forcibly. It was necessary for him to be exposed to them—necessary that he should go through a process of inoculation. Some men pass through safely; others become beachcombers and "turn native." It depends largely upon the man, whether the East dominates him or he dominates his tiny portion of it.

DR. DILL recognized in Julius certain unmistakable symptoms: shortened visits in the city, a curious burning look in the eyes, a growing carelessness in dress, a greater interest in *stengahs,* or Scotch highballs, and a falling off in the volume of his reports. It was certain that the young chemist was nearing a critical stage. Something had to be done about it. He was, the Doctor secretly knew, infatuated with a certain color—green. The Doctor did not know why a man became infatuated with a certain color, but he did know that that was, as a symptom, the most positive of them all. Julius had secretly visited the island pagoda at Paknam for a glimpse of the gulf at dawn. And then, for a time, the symptoms went away. The young man blossomed forth in splendid new raiment; he drank less; the look of smoldering went out of his eyes; and his

visits to Bangkok were lengthened on the flimsiest of excuses.

The reason for this reassuring change was not hard to find; and the Doctor was relieved—delighted—to learn that the girl was Jessica Bowman, for he knew that the boy could not have made a wiser choice. And yet he knew Julius' temperament well enough to realize that the danger was not yet past, and that the course of young love must, in this instance, have powerful external guidance.

He found work for Julius that would keep the young man in Bangkok for two uninterrupted months; then he devised schemes which would throw Julius and Jessica constantly together. The climax of his strategy was reached when King Rama himself invited them to the Ayeuthian elephant-hunt, where the albino elephants were selected for the king's private temple. And when Julius and Jessica returned from Ayeuthia, they were engaged.

Dr. Dill presented the young couple with a house to be furnished by himself, and in so doing felt himself relieved of a tremendous responsibility. He had guided Julius through ticklish waters, had landed him safe on the other side! And two days before the evening set for the marriage, the young man disappeared.

DOKA, the Doctor's most confidential runner, brought to him late at night the news that the young *nai hong* had paddled down the river in a canoe, after having partaken of countless *stengahs* in the bar at the Oriental Hotel.

"A madness seemed to have taken him, master," Doka elaborated. "He is in no mind to go to Paknam. Those Morn girls—"

The Doctor stopped him impatiently. He realized exactly what would happen to a man who went to Paknam in Julius' state of mind. Julius was slipping. And there was no time to lose.

"There is a girl, a Timoran Lahn Chon—" he began.

A gleam leaped into Doka's eyes. "Aye, master, I know, I know." He was squatting on the rug at the Doctor's feet, gazing upward at the white man with a dog's reverence, just as the headmen of the villages gazed up at him when he went about on the Doctor's errands.

For a half-hour the Doctor talked, giving him minute instructions. He would cure Julius, once and forever!

Doka, paddling furiously, reached Paknam a full hour ahead of Julius and outlined a busy and eventful day for the village to the headmen. To Timoran Lahn Chon, who was a sorceress, he presented a number of pleasing gifts with the Doctor's compliments and orders.

A little later Julius was lounging on the grassy low bank of the orange river, gazing out over the gulf. Apple-green and absinthe-green simmered and gleamed. A trading-junk with lateen sails, resolved by distance into a miniature, metallically reflected the color—a Chinese carving, exquisitely done after the manner of Huang-Chuen, in Number One jade.

The first rays of the sun were still invisible. The dome of the world had simply filled with silky green light as a bubble is filled with air, a smooth, hurried, inscrutable process.

Once, several months ago, Julius had visited Paknam at this hour, the green dawn, the play of magical color like deep, voluminous music tricking him into a half-mad mood of exultation. The emotion that thrilled through him was almost too savage to bear. He had surrendered to something, he did not know what. He had run away from something—was it Jessica? Or what Jessica implied? Security, steadiness, decency! He pitied Jessica. He loved her, had loved her always, it seemed—until last night. And then a craving for freedom had overpowered him. What he had craved was this, yet not entirely this—to saturate himself, to lose himself in the exotic delights of tropical dawn.

Behind him a jungle whispered, and the river rippled by at his feet—an orange ribbon unwinding into a dimpling green vastness. The outflowing river was absorbed by the greedy green, but not so the rising sun. A delicate rosy ray—a drop of blood falling from the sky to the clear, green water, diffusing until the universe was no longer green and the masthead of the junk was a ruby splinter.

A murmuring passed him. The morning breeze sprang up in the rice and bamboo, the tamarinds and mahoganies, carrying to him a scent of sweet pepper-blossoms and cooking odors from the near-by *kampong*. The breath of air fondled his hot cheeks with the tenderness of a woman's fingers. He wondered why the green of the gulf, the green of the jungle, should mean soft living, the solicitude of women

—gracious women with golden hands and red lips and shining eyes.

THERE was a faint padding on the beaten path behind him. Something colorful and graceful glided past toward the river's edge—and when he straightened up, he was all attention. What the exhilarating madness of the green dawn had lacked was this. Here was a girl as slender and supple as the Indian dancing-girls, with a skin as white as his own! One bright bare arm supported a red earthen jug which was balanced beautifully upon her little head. Quantities of shining black hair rippled back from her forehead and over her shoulders. Bright yellow stars peeped from it—spicy and sacred hedge-flowers. Her slim body was swathed in folds of hand-woven Mandalay silk of green-and-white check, but her breasts were not covered, indicating that she was *luk-sao*—a virgin not yet spoken for. A Shan girl, he decided then, for her lips were innocent of the corrosive betel-paste.

It was the green *engyi* that captured Julius—that and the disk of jade in either ear-lobe. He was awed by the fitness of the silk garment and the jade disks—it was as if he had created her perfection out of his own tumultuous thoughts.

But the girl did not glance up.

Julius turned slowly, drinking her in from the nape of her golden neck to the heels of her sandaled feet. The girl glided away, presently removing her finger-tips from the water-jug as if to impress him with her coolness and indifference.

Julius stood staring in delight with his shoulders backed lazily against the pagoda wall, as the red jug above the green *engyi* became smaller and smaller, until at length the maiden was lost in the swaying tops of marsh grass no less green than the silk she wore.

WHEN she returned, the water-jug was purple with wet; as she sidled by, with an almost liquid freedom of movement in the seductive "glide of the elephant," her eyes were lifted, and a glance, defiant and repelling, was darted at him. His delight increased when he saw that her eyes were green.

With a confident grin he called after her the country's greeting to friend and stranger alike—"Whither goest thou?" And the girl, impulsively seizing the jug, replied in a quavering voice and with another repellent shaft from her green eyes: "*Bai bang*"—"To my home."

"*Mah ni!*" he commanded with a laugh. "Come here!"

The purple jug fell to the path and cracked into fragments as the girl leaped away from him. She darted toward the *kampong*. Still grinning, Julius loped after her.

AN old woman with cracked yellow skin and greasy gray hair was half-asleep as she squatted on her heels before the compound fire, lazily stirring a mess of *khoy* and rice and fish in a bamboo pot. But her indolence became an attitude of the past when she was made to understand the manner of this interruption.

She glanced from the terrified girl to Julius, and surveyed him shrewdly but not unkindly; and when she opened her puckered, toothless old mouth to speak, the young man realized the need of keeping his wits about him if he did not care to pay twice and thrice.

He was sharply informed that he had selected as the object of his adoration a pearl that was all but beyond price. No ordinary Morn girl was this one. A lineal descendant of royal Burmese princesses, she was yet half white, her father having been the Scotch chief engineer on a Blue Funnel.

A white man, then, must be prepared to pay a fitting sum for so superlative a gem. Had he paused to consider the perfection of her young body? Her desirability from the viewpoint of all men, particularly the old, rich men? The good fortune of the one she and her *ngats* chose to bestow her magic upon? For had she not been born in the waxing of the moon, early in the morning on the Day of the Tiger?

The girl was sixteen, lacking a month—a ripe age for marriage! None dwelt in the length and breadth of the land who matched her loveliness. Could she not play upon the *soung* and the *put-alla* more deliciously even than the Karen temple girls? As for her singing voice—well, the dawn song of the *chumpee* was a water-soaked barrel by comparison!

Julius managed to navigate the talk into less perilous channels. He had only a few hundred *ticals* in his money-belt. The frightened eyes of the girl were maddening in his present state of mind; he wanted to crush that slim, golden body in his

hands. He tried to be shrewd. The crafty eyes of the old hag did not waver a hair: he must not betray his desire. He was not wise in such transactions, but he had heard other men tell of their experiences, and he would have his way in the end. It was only a question of a little time, a little cunning, a little indifference.

And so he guided the talk to other matters—the new albino elephant in the king's temple—a strange, disgusting cure for cobra-bite—the celibacy of Rama the Fifth.

Banana plants in the compound rustled and whispered expectantly. A genial sea-wind chuckled around corners and playfully tossed little flurries of dust and ashes about in the air. The rice-pot fussed and fumed.

JULIUS struck a bargain by noon and paid one hundred *ticals* for Timoran Lahn Chon. The nipa hut and the adjoining compound were thrown in for good measure, with a guarantee of the permanent absence from the household of Timoran Lahn Chon's worthy mother. This he had slyly stipulated, after committing the error of mentioning that he might linger but a day or two.

After the ten ten-*tical* bills had been counted into the old woman's claws, he listened impatiently while she impressed upon him the folly and the danger of betraying the love of a Shan woman. All Shan women, the Morns in particular, were skilled magic-workers; and the devils they worshiped gave them power over the destinies of men in ways that were beyond comprehension. He had only to steal a glance into the girl's green, repellent eyes to believe that this might be possible.

Timoran Lahn Chon hated him. Every muscle of her lithe body strained away from his as he approached her, and she backed away a step at a time until her shoulders touched the corner-post of the hut. He reached out for her, but she sprang aside, screaming, ran to the edge of the *klong* and poised there, prepared to leap into the water if he came near her, and babbling at him in rage and terror. She called him a crab from the nameless islands, a potato, a black rat!

Julius sprang after her, and Timoran leaped into the knee-deep muddy water. She splashed to the other side screaming, and there, abruptly, her screams ended. When Julius reached the opposite bank, she had vanished into the bamboo thicket. He plunged after her and wildly commanded her to stop, to come back. And when she did not answer, he plunged on, breaking his way through a yielding wall of tender green shoots.

But Timoran had escaped. She would not answer him. And as he hunted, an old man, her uncle, who had the face and eyes of a fox and a grin of evil, found him.

" 'When you marry a woman, a cat must die,' " he quoted consolingly. "It is well that she flees you, *nai hong*. She is strangely mad for luxury and for ease. She is not a wifely woman, but a creature of passion. How lucky you are to have lost her before it was too late!"

"Help me find her!" Julius commanded him. "Find her for me, and I'll pay you fifty *ticals!*"

Fox-face grinned. "Ahi! The *nai-hong* is too kind!"

THEY hunted together, and the sun was a drooping globe in the west when Julius and Timoran's half-caste uncle returned to the *kampong*. He wanted Timoran; he wanted to seize her and crumple her into weeping surrender; and he listened through a brain-haze to the softly spoken advice the girl's relatives and friends poured out to him.

Indeed, all of Paknam, it seemed, must be crowding into the compound; and Julius realized that word must have gone abroad that the foreigner had a fabulous fortune strapped about his middle; and the foreigner is legitimate prey always.

The half-caste uncle, Fox-face, hinted to him that the girl was mad over jade and green silks. No doubt she had crossed the river to Paklat, was hiding there. Would it not be wise to lure her back with gifts?

Julius commissioned Fox-face to hasten to the City of Brilliant Diamonds, for bracelets and anklets of jade, for ribbed Maharaja silk dyed green to match her eyes, for gilt-wrapped cakes of sweetened almond-paste. But he was confident that she would return before her uncle. She would not stay away all night.

He took up his abode in the hut alone, and waited. Long before the moon rose, he slipped out and paddled across the river to Paklat. He wakened the village, but there was no trace of Timoran. And when he returned to the island, the girl's relatives were silently waiting for him.

They were grieved at Timoran's folly; but would he listen while they explained? It was a point of such delicacy that they had feared he might not understand.

She was, they told him, as rare as a tooth of Buddha. Her lips gave a value to nonsense that amber does to the insect it embalms. Often she absented herself for days at a time in this strange fashion, to return with wonderful tales of far-away lands she had visited in visions.

She had seen the Buddha of Kapilivastu in an oyster. She had seen a thousand worshipers at a shrine in the Hindu-Koosh where there was the dorsal fin of a fish big enough for a horse and rider to pass through. She had danced for the devil-brothers in the riverless valley at Taung-Byone, near Mandalay, a naked golden flame in the mirrors of the candles, the stars and the quartered moon, the maddest of the *ngat*-girls.

She had seen in a dream the state in Kashmir governed by a woman where demons are worshiped. She had had visions of the white god who would come to her on a green dawn with gifts of gems and gold and silks to lure her heart away. She had dreamed of a life of love and tranquillity with this white god from over the seas, who would in time become a Shan, and the father of Shans.

But would he consent to the old Shan ceremony whereby he would become for all time the spiritual mate of Timoran Lahn Chon? It was her fear of his refusal that had, they whispered, caused the girl to run away. If he would consent, they would take him to her without delay.

THEIR soft words washed over him like the lazy, seductive waves of a tropical sea. He would promise anything; he'd go through a dozen ceremonies to get possession of Timoran Lahn Chon!

They conducted the young chemist through the pagoda compound, past the minor spirit-guardian *wats,* and into the *prachidee* of the great stone pagoda. Hosts of candles were burning in niches along the gold-laquered walls, and in thick clusters at the elbows of a squatting Buddha.

He breathed air sweet and heavy with the odor of flowers from Bangalore. A gaunt priest in yellow robes tapped softly with his fingers upon a drum in a black alcove; another clinked with musical gourds upon an ebony slab. Voices rose in the mournful, measured beat of a chant.

The young sorceress was crouching upon the packed dirt with her shoulders between the knees of the clay idol, her arms folded upon her breast, her eyes dull and heavy-lidded. She glanced up trance-like when Julius appeared, and gazed dreamily from him to a bamboo litter beside her.

He stared at her, and beyond her through a low, vaulted doorway to the black river, the lights of a little tramp freighter in the gulf glowing through the drifting mist, then lowered himself to the litter and lay back.

The girl's body swayed slowly with the chant, and her dulled eyes were fixed mesmerically upon his. Candle-flames struck glints from them, and they seemed to glow redly. He was a little uneasy. Never to his knowledge had a ceremony of this kind been connected with the purchase of a native girl.

Incense had been sprinkled into a brazier at his side. The fumes rose in thick coils, white like steam, and sickenly sweet. A woman placed a black-lacquered cup at his lips. Julius for a moment hesitated to drink, then lifted his head and tasted the liquid. It was cool, as if drawn recently from a spring, pungent with blended spices, and rather sour.

HE drank the cup and sank back. A coolness immediately stole through him, as if he had suddenly become aware of a chill in the night. He was given a second cup to drink, and presently a third. His head was beginning to throb, more slowly than the temple drum and the gourds; and the chanting seemed to come from farther away.

A breeze from some higher region crept through the temple, fluttering the candle-flames. The moon had risen over the nameless islands, popping up suddenly like a green egg, staining the sky with the green of glaze ice, dimming the luster of the hotly burning stars, and shedding a cool emerald light over the mist on the river.

The cluster of feeble lights riding over the Menam bar twinkled less brightly now from the vague dark hull of the tramp outside waiting for the dawn and high tide. Julius had gazed at many like her without emotion, but the glimpse of her now sent an unaccountable shiver through him. The chanting sank away to a soft blur, as though he were listening through films of time and space. But his mind was as clear as the icy green moon.

Dark figures came and stole away; voices spoke to him; but he neither saw nor heard them. The cool magic of Timoran's drug had transported him through an interval of years. He was here again—here still! His work in the jungles had become a dim, unstirring memory. The dream of Jessica had faded too. It was queer, how easily he could see through a cause to its effect. One hour of surrender to the malignant spirit of the jungle had brought the temple of old dreams and ambitions tumbling down about him. He was warm and comfortable. Timoran had woven about him a soft, clinging net from which there was no escape. He did not want to escape. He had sunk softly and pleasantly into the warm, fragrant bosom of the East. He was penniless now.

Dr. Dill had found him—yes, lying half-naked under a tree. The little doctor was pained by the sight. He had seen this thing happen so many times in his years in Bangkok and Singapore!

"So this is what happened to you!" he was saying. "So this is what happened!"

And Jessica stood beside him, gazing down at him with contempt in her honest blue eyes.

Julius shivered. Timoran was no longer swaying. He stared at her and blinked, dismayed and shocked by a transformation that had taken place. Black magic! She was no longer a beautiful girl; she had become a green replica of the idol under which she sat. Her skin had changed to the hard glitter of jade; she no longer possessed eyes, but green, hollow sockets which caught the candle-light in gleaming red scimitars.

The voices were chanting, but they seemed to reach him now across the widening gulf. He felt cold, numb, drowsy.

SUDDENLY a voice, a man's voice, rose above the others, clear, shrill, like a warning. The outstanding voice repeated over and over that the white man's spirit was soon to be replaced by another; and the memory that had been struggling out of some deep recess flashed into his mind—the horrible story he had heard from the lips of Dr. Dill.

They had trapped him for sacrifice, as they had trapped that other white man in the jungles above Moulmein! They were draining his life from him with this cold drug. It was terribly clear to him now. They would, at the instant the life left his body, infuse into the still warm corpse the spirit of a *ngat,* a devil. This was the ceremony, and it was the dream of every maddened girl who danced for the devil-brothers at Taung-Byone!

The black-lacquer cup was pressed to his lips again. He clamped them feebly, tried to lift his hands. Fear or the drug had paralyzed them. He tried then to move his legs. He could feel the growing coldness in them, but they would not respond to his will.

PANIC seized his brain. He was helpless, might even be dying! He would never, never see Jessica again! He attempted to move his hands, then his legs. They were weighted down—immovable! A wave of helpless fury flushed through him, and sweat trickled down his forehead and cheeks.

And unexpectedly his two hands flew up. He sprang, staggering, to his feet.

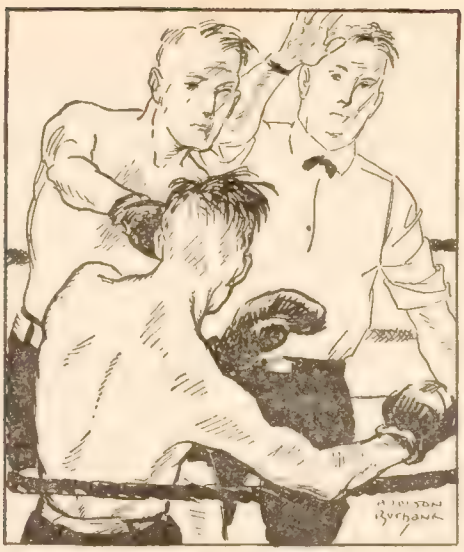
The chanting abruptly stopped; the temple drum and the gourds became silent.

Julius spun drunkenly about, saw nothing but a semicircle of evil, expectant grins. With a bellow of rage he swung toward the altar. The two squatting idols, one of gray clay, the other of green jade, seemed to leer at him. Which of them was Timoran Lahn Chon? That one he would stamp into fragments!

Hands pawed at him, and he struck them down. The jade image miraculously became alive, screamed, darted past him into the darkness.

For a moment he stared into the semicircle of faces, then bolted through the vaulted doorway to the river bank. The moon had risen, was shrinking and bleaching. He whistled softly. His forehead was prickling wet. He was trembling with weakness, the weakness of a man who has been purged of a fever. What a narrow squeak it had been! The East was constantly setting these traps for you. How narrowly he had escaped the velvet jaws of this one!

As he climbed shakily into his canoe, he suddenly remembered that this was his wedding morning. Tonight he would marry Jessica. He watched a bar of soft green light creep upon the Eastern horizon. Unaccountably he shuddered. Dr. Dill would have labeled this as an unmistakable sign that Julius Prine was rapidly convalescing from a malignant and nameless malady.



Battle Galore

The author of this remarkable story is himself a professional pugilist; and in this, as in his recently published novel, "Emmet Lawler," he gives you the real feelings, motives and actions of the man in the arena.

By Jim Tully

EDDIE McCUE had knocked Barney Glynn out with the first punch landed in the first round. It had not been expected, for even Eddie McCue was surprised.

They squared off under a California sun, their tanned bodies resembling bronze statues touched with quick and nervous life. A gloved right crossed a gloved left during a furious exchange in the first minute of fighting. Barney's hands dropped. The blow had been a driving one, delivered with such force that his knees had no time to sag slowly. They bent suddenly and struck the canvas with the weight of his body upon them.

Barney was unconscious for half an hour.

The defeated fighter and his manager now sat on a truck in San Bernardino and watched the steel rails of the Santa Fe stretch away toward Los Angeles.

"Believe me, Spike," said Barney, "if I ever win a regular fight, I'm goin' to buy a farm so big a cow'll get lost on it."

"What's amatter? Aint you eatin'? You git discouraged too easy; you aint only been fightin' ten years," answered Manager Spike Robinson.

"Yes, but I think I'll give it up, Spike," replied Barney.

"You're nuttier'n a walnut tree, Barney. Look at some o' them writin' guys; they has to write a dozen years before they gits in a Y. M. C. A. lib'ry free. Every fighter has to hit the ham-and-egg stuff."

"I know, Spike; but I've been bumpin' 'em so long, the hogs and chickens have got it in for me. I was passin' a butcher shop the other day in Los, when a rooster sticks his head out and pecks at me."

"Why, you poor lost hairloon, a rooster don't lay eggs."

"I know, Spike; but he's the hen's manager."

"You only got one fault as a fighter, Barney; you're too generous takin' 'em on the chin. You oughta be more reserved-like."

"I take 'em on the chin, Spike; but it's like the little rain droppin' on a drake's back. They rolls right off."

"That one Eddie McCue slammed you didn't roll off, Barney."

"That's different, Spike—a whole cloud fell."

"Yeah! An' you slep' like a dead angel so long I had the church desecrated in purple for you. I thought you was dead, an' then you come to, an' I had to go out and kill another fighter so's not to spoil the desecration. A guy earns his dough, managin' you."

"Well, don't I slip you fifty-fifty, Spike?"

"Sometimes; but your fifty-fifty's like the guy that runs the restaurant and fed the people horse with rabbit till they ketches him, and he says: 'O' course I use a little horse with it.'

"'How much?' says the Food Impersonator for the Gov'ment."

"'Oh, 'bout fifty-fifty,' says he."

"WELL, I'm goin' to get married, Spike," announced Barney after a few moments of silence. "Velma Hogan—I tell you she's a good kid."

"She may be a good kid, Barney, but she aint puttin' no fresh eggs in your basket. Some baby'd poke you on the chin, and you'd do a Carpentare and spill 'em. How the devil you think marryin'd help you—give you more practice?"

"No, you poor hazelnut! I'm—in love," answered Barney.

"It takes two to be in love, Barney. . . . . I'm off that stuff. I wouldn't love the Statue o' Liberty in a dress made out o' twenty-dollar bills."

A truck, loaded with trunks, rumbled by. The two men became quiet, and looked across the tracks at a great engine, shining black in the sun.

Barney's jaw was square, and his face was hard from the battering of many padded fists. But there was a soft expression in his eyes that the rough years of the ring had never hardened. His shoulder-muscles bulged under his well-fitting coat; and his hands, large at the knuckles, rested easily on his knees. The ring had taught him poise.

Spike's eyes squinted under the sun. He was touching fifty, and his jaws were beginning to sag. Spike growled at life, but loved it. He would throw a beggar a dollar, and rave while he did it. Then he would murmur under his breath: "Poor devil!"

Spike was English, and had followed the prize-ring since he was sixteen years old. In his day he had been considered the best man in England at his weight. He was just beginning to go downhill, when he met the terrible Terry McGovern, who was at the top of the hill in America. It was Terry's punches that started Spike's jaws to sagging. He never entered the ring again, save only in exhibition bouts for charitable purposes.

Down deep in his heart Spike had one consuming idea. Even in spite of the quick knockout of the day before, he still felt that Barney Glynn was the greatest welterweight alive. He insisted that the Champion was afraid of Barney. He sat quietly now, fumbling a huge diamond in a cluster of emeralds on the third finger of his unshapely, gnarled left hand.

Just then the ground vibrated with the roll of an approaching train.

"Thank the Lord!" said Spike. "We'll be in Los Angeles in a jiffy."

THEY boarded the train. As the engine whistled out of the yards and through the orange groves beyond San Bernardino, a newsboy came through the car announcing the Los Angeles papers. Spike bought a copy, saying: "I aint seen the Bible yet this mornin'!" He turned to the sporting page.

"Gee, Barney," he said, "I see there's a guy down in Chloride that's knockin' 'em all cuckoo." Spike looked out of the window. "I got an idea, Barney," he said.

"Hold it, Spike! You'll never get another," grinned Barney as he touched his sore jaw.

"Yeah! An' if it works out, it'll put cakes in the shack all winter. Didn't you never have an idea, Barney?"

"Sure, but they aint so rare with me that I have to tell people when I get one."

"But this is a rare one, Barney. Listen to it. Suppose we go into Los and fix up a match with this kid down in Chloride they call the Jaw-splitter. He's only a greener, the paper says, an' we'll romp in there under consumed names that them copper-diggers never heard of, an' we'll take our ten thousand berries apiece an' bet it on ourselves. Then when the fight's over, after the funeral, all we'll have to do is collect our kale and bid the natives adidoodle and breeze on out. What sayest thou, Movie Actor?"

"Disregardin' your insult, Spike, I don't like to give the boy down there a set-

back; it aint fair. But then, we all get 'em; there may be mercy in heaven, but they aint none in the ring. That makes me think, Spike; a ring is round, and the prize-ring is square, and yet they call it a ring. Why is that?"

"Well, I know it aint right, Barney, to call a square thing round, but the square-heads that fight in it think it's round."

Barney nodded his head and then went into a long talk as to the injustice of beating a youngster and taking the heart out of him at the start. When he had finished, Spike asked:

"What pulpit do you spout in next Sunday, Mr. Glynn?"

"I speak in the Morgue, Spike, to the Fight-managers' Association," Spike grunted. "Well, shall I fix up the match?"

"Sure, if you wanta. Don't bother me no more. The train hits Los soon, an' I wanta save my jaw for Velma."

"Sure," said Spike. "You always gotta talk to her. That's what makes your jaw weak. You wear it out tellin' her how purty she is. If you had the jack that women has cost fighters, you wouldn't need to fight no more."

"Velma's different," returned Barney.

"That's what Mark Annery thought about Cleoclapper. What a boob he was, eh, Barney!"

But the fighter made no answer.

THEY were met at the station in Los Angeles by a dark-haired girl who had bright blue eyes, even white teeth, and a row of tiny freckles across her nose. Greetings over, Spike left them and hurried off to arrange the details of the Chloride match.

As Velma Hogan shook hands with Barney, he said: "Gosh, Velma, you're a darb. You got more life than a zebra, and more looks than the Billie Burke."

Velma had been Barney's friend since his preliminary days. In spite of her pleading with him to save, he had scattered money like hail upon a Kansas meadow. He had loaned Velma enough to start a restaurant, which she quickly made prosper. Like other kind-hearted men, Barney had forgotten the detail and had steadily refused payment. But Velma had remembered it.

Barney was one among many men who wished to marry Velma, and who always received the same reply: "I'll take the matter under consideration."

SPIKE was successful in making the match, and the articles of agreement called for the appearance of fighter and manager in Chloride five days before the fight. Upon the day of their departure, Velma decided to accompany them.

"I think I'll take a jaunt to Chloride myself," she said. "There's no harm in taking the desert air, is there, Barney?"

"Sure not, Velm; there's enough to go round," answered Barney.

"But kin you keep your mouth shut?" asked Spike.

"Say, Spike; the Spinks'll be gabbier than Bill Bryan talkin' about heaven to Billy Sunday, compared to me. "I don't queer nobody's game. I run a restaurant too long," laughed Velma.

The train carried the three travelers over yellow miles of desert that seemed to reach out to the end of the world. The next morning they alighted at the station and were motored fourteen miles across the desert to Chloride.

The town of Chloride was composed of men and women long used to the elemental things of life. The Jaw-splitter had drifted thither some time before, and after his first fight the citizens claimed him as their own and worshipped him accordingly.

"You know, Barney," said Velma in the stage, "I have a hunch that this Jaw-splitter can fight, and my hunches don't go wrong often."

"Well," said Spike, "you gotta bum hunch this time. You know less about a prize-fight than one of them guys that fights for the movies. Barney kin lick this guy with his tongue, and we're bettin' ten thousand cartwheels apiece he kin. You put in a thou' of your dough, Velma."

"Not till I see the Jaw-splitter, Spike. I run a feed-joint too long to buy eggs I don't know about."

The Chloride *News* announced to the desert world that Kid Adams and his manager had arrived in town with their social secretary, in order to engage in a spirited contest with the Jaw-splitter. While the natives watched Barney train, he would skip the rope and punch the bag indifferently. A local fighter who had been knocked out by the Jaw-splitter acted as Barney's sparring partner. The citizens would watch the local man hold his own with Barney and then bet their money lavishly on the Jaw-splitter. So much money was bet that Spike wired a suave gentleman in Los Angeles, and he came

with five thousand more to accommodate the natives.

"You're doin' fine, Barney. They think you're a ham fighter. You kin do your real fightin' in the ring," observed Spike.

THERE was a withered old Irishman who watched Barney train, and as he did so, he would scrutinize carefully his every movement. He would then watch with the same interest the Jaw-splitter train. He voiced no opinion, but kept his own counsel. Paddy Flaherty had a pug nose and faded freckles on a red face. His shrewd but kindly gray eyes squinted from long years under a desert sun. Paddy had been the lightweight champion in the old bare-knuckles days. He had slipped quietly from the Eastern world and had taken his ring earnings with him, become a prospector in the West, and for years he had endured hardships with the same courage that he had endured the battering of bare knuckles against his Irish face. Successful as a fighter, he was likewise successful as a business man and miner. The prize-ring was his passion, and it was through him that Chloride was on the fistic map. Paddy was the friend of broken fighters. He asked nothing of them in the ring but a heart that knew not fear. After he had watched both men train, his only comment on the coming fight was: "It'll be a battle."

The night before the fight Velma and Barney walked out under the desert moon, while Spike regaled himself by sitting in the lobby of the Copper King Hotel and pitying the natives who were sentenced to live in Chloride. He hummed a line of a song all his own.

> Nothin' to do but to wait and die,
> As you watch the snails go whizzin' by.

The desert moon made the rugged fighter more poetic than a moving-picture cowboy.

"Why can't you marry me, Vel? They aint nobody'll treat you better. I'll be as civil all my life as a travelin' salesman to a waitress is when he's lookin' for a date. Gosh, you can't ask for anythin' better'n that. I can't spill you no fancy talk like Spike. He's got a line o' blarney like a admiral in the Irish Navy. He sure is irrepristible with women."

Velma looked up at him as she held his coat lapels: "Barney, dear," she said, "I want you, and I d-o-n-'t want you." The words ended in a sob.

The yellow moon slid behind the one cloud in the desert sky. The temporary darkness made the earth resemble a great room with a yellow floor. The echo of a coyote chorus rolled through the air. It clanged in the souls of the tired bruiser and the woman he loved. There followed long moments of silence. . . . . The clouds slid away from the face of the moon.

Barney looked up at the great shining sphere. "I wish I knew what life was all about," he said. "It's the funniest world I was ever in. Nobody knows nothin' for sure. But there's some good guys around the legs of the footstool, though."

There was a pause. "Vel," he said, "I'd like to own a little ranch, and hire you for life to be my wife. You could wear a gingham apron and carry water for the ducks to swim in. You could read stories to me outta magazines in the evenin's. I've only wanted two things I never got —you and bein' champion."

"Which would you want the most," asked Velma.

"You!"

They walked back to the town that sprawled as quietly on the desert as a sleeping dog before a winter fire.

THEN came the next day and the hour of the fight.

The pine amphitheater was filled to overflowing. There was no roof on the structure, and the hot sun blazed down on warped seats. There was a constant rumble of voices through the building. Paddy Flaherty, by an odd coincidence, sat next to Velma, near the ring. Velma at this moment had a new feeling for Barney Glynn. She had watched the Jaw-splitter train. What a man he was! What a man it would take to beat him! Was Barney that man?

Velma was not without a mind that analyzed things. She recalled the many grueling battles that Barney had endured with a smile. And Barney was not stolid. To endure them was something—no matter what "nice" people said.

Three times in seven years he had been so close to the welterweight crown that he could place his battered hands upon it. Three times it had slipped from his hand. It would have broken the heart of many a lesser man to have lost even once after having been so near a throne. But Barney always smiled a brave Irish smile.

Velma thought back to her own start toward success in life—the twenty thou-

sand, and Liberty Bonds, all through Barney's kindness. She remembered the remark made by the broken-down gambler who had said: "Barney'd give anybody his shoes and walk barefooted across a cactus bed. He's whiter'n the White House."

As Barney entered the ring, Velma called to him. He walked across to her. His lips were set tight, and the soft expression had gone from his eyes. "Good luck, Barney! You'll have to fight."

"I know it, girl; but I'm ready."

Just then a mighty shout went up. Barney returned to his corner.

"Lord, hear 'em rave! Here comes the Jaw-splitter," said Spike.

THE wave of cheering no sooner subsided than another one followed. The Jaw-splitter seemed oblivious of it, and busied himself testing the ropes of the ring. He was squat and bow-legged, and his jaw was as square as his shoulders. He moved about the ring with the unconcern of an old ringster. He again tested the ropes after his gloves had been placed on his hands. He did not even look across the ring at the man he was to fight. The shrewd eyes of Paddy Flaherty looked long at each fighter. Spike and Barney glanced at each other with unanswered questions in their eyes.

Formalities were soon over. When the gong sounded, the Jaw-splitter walked to the center of the ring as though great weights were at his ankles. Barney sparred a moment with him; and then all of a sudden the Jaw-splitter's hands moved with the rapidity of lightning as he leaped toward Barney. As they fought close, their gloved hands thudded like yellow cannon-balls against naked muscular bodies and strong, set faces.

Paddy Flaherty's brain tingled with old memories as he watched the whirling bruisers in the ring. They clinched for a pain-mad second; in the break-away the Jaw-splitter's right hissed through the air, and Barney missed oblivion by the fraction of an inch. The Jaw-splitter was slightly unbalanced from the wasted force of the blow, and Barney rattled four terrible lefts against his concrete jaw without receiving a reply.

The Jaw-splitter balanced himself and stood before the man who had delivered the lightning blows—a master of the lightning himself. They worked in close again, and their five-ounce gloves crossed and recrossed like stinging missiles hurled with superhuman force.

An immense spectacle followed. With the supple grace of lions unleashed, the muscular antagonists moved their hands and bodies with terrible precision. Blows that would have staggered horses were stopped by each man. They became gory. Their muscles crawled swiftly beneath crimson skin. Like red monsters fighting with uncanny skill to the death, they attacked and retreated beneath the desert sun. The audience forgot everything but the lurching, and whirling, the pain-maddened efforts of the two mighty bruisers in the ring.

The gong clanged loud, then louder, until at last it was heard by the reeling and blood-spattered pugilists in the ring. A tense quiet settled over the audience as suddenly as a California darkness over a mountain. The reaction from the spectacular first round had left them strangely speechless.

AT the beginning of the second round Barney rushed out of his corner like a man starting on a hundred-yard dash. The Jaw-splitter was hardly out of his chair, and not in an upright position to face his attack. It was merciless and staggering. "Crouch! *Crouch!* My God —*crouch!*" screamed his manager. Barney's gloves, stained with blood, and soggy with water, crashed against the Jaw-splitter's body and face with a noise like the pounding of a drum.

The valiant Jaw-splitter spread his knotty bow-legs wide apart and dug the heels of his shoes into the canvas as if to keep from falling. The manager yelled again: "Turtle it! In your shell!" His compact body doubled up, and his muscles contracted until they were as rigid as stone. Barney's right hand slammed against the Jaw-splitter's forehead and opened a gash three inches long above his right eye. And at the very zenith of his pain, with the blood streaming over his gloves, he came out of his shell and faced the bewildering attack. His terrible hairy arms swung blindly through space.

The elusive Barney stepped in and out like a mannikin jerked with wires. Seeing that his blows were missing their aim, the Jaw-splitter rushed in a last mad effort of fury. Barney's feet planted firmly on the canvas floor, his muscles now tightened and

bulged, a blood-streaked gladiator awaiting a storm. It came. Their heads crashed together, and the blood streamed from a newly made wound near Barney's left eye. "Oo-o! Oo-oo!" they groaned.

Faces twisted with pain, blood streaming into their eyes, neither man gave ground. A wet glove seemed to come from the floor and uppercut Barney, and the blood gushed out of his teeth. The Jaw-splitter's hands then slammed against the staggering body of Barney with terrible fury. Velma wept hysterically. Flaherty soothed her with a kind word. Men covered their eyes with their hands. Then Barney rallied. He rushed forward, and the Jaw-splitter crouched.

Flaherty stood up and waved his hands in the gorgeous thrill of it all. The audience arose to a man. The Jaw-splitter—now like a bloody swimmer about to sink—clutched at the mighty form of Barney with boa-constrictor arms. The local referee mercifully allowed him to cling with a dying embrace.

"What the hell's a matter, Ref? You got money on this fight?" yelled Spike. The gong sounded; the brawny Jaw-splitter sank into his chair helpless as a child.

The silence of the Grand Cañon at midnight fell over the audience.

SPIKE crooned words that were a lullaby in the battle-roaring ears of Barney Glynn. The fighter's passion-swept heart kept tune with the words. Velma turned to Flaherty and said, "Isn't he wonderful?" and Flaherty answered: "They're both men, me girl." And Spike kept talking.

"Battle, old boy, we got the dough counted. We'll be neighbors on a ranch near old Lost Ankles. We'll raise cows an' sell their teeth to the Elks for watch-charms. Battle, boy, battle!"

The gong!

Like a mad bull the Jaw-splitter lurched across the ring. That rush would have made a weaker man than Barney crawl through the ropes. But Barney Glynn stood and waited as still as an Irish statue on a Dublin street. When the Jaw-splitter was within a foot of him, Barney sidestepped. The ropes swayed and creaked as the Jaw-splitter lunged against them. Now Velma knew why he had tested them before the fight. Before he could pull himself together, Barney crashed his padded fists against his face with the *rat-a-tat-tat* of a madman beating a drum. The crowd again stood up and forgot to cheer. Silently, with open mouths, they stood petrified, as if awaiting chaos.

But the fighters were oblivious of the crowd as they lurched again and again to battle. The ropes creaked and swayed as their bodies rubbed against them. The top rope had sawed a raw red place above the Jaw-splitter's kidney muscle.

THE gong sounded. Neither man heard it.

"Damn your soul!" groaned Barney.

"Pray for your own!" groaned the Jaw-splitter.

The gong clanged furiously. The rival managers and the referee tried to pull the men apart. It was to no purpose. They fought on.

The women in the audience laughed hysterically under the strain. Desert-silent men dug their nails into their hands to keep from showing emotion. Paddy Flaherty wept.

The Jaw-splitter missed a hard left and stepped backward, then forward with a right that sang as it whizzed through the air. Barney laughed a ghoulish, bloody laugh, as the blow missed his jaw and landed on his chest.

But as he laughed, he sprawled backward. The silence of the desert was no more. The audience screamed wildly, like hoodlums when the home team is winning. But the cheering lasted no more than a second.

A maddened warrior, Barney rushed forward into the arms of brain-reeling battle. The gong sounded fiercely, but it could no more be heard than the tinkling of a baby's bell. Each man delivered blows so terrible that the audience twitched under the pain they felt they were enduring. "Gosh!" grunted a jaded old miner. "What a hell of a scramble!"

Paddy Flaherty looked at the man banging the gong, and said, "Let 'em fight," and then quietly, under his breath: "They redame themselves."

Barney's right caught the Jaw-splitter on the nose, and the blood spurted as if from the thin nozzle of a hose. It fell upon Barney's gloves, and was carried back to the Jaw-splitter's face with thudding force. The Jaw-splitter went to his knees, and his manager and another second rushed out and dragged him, limp, to his corner. Barney staggered about the ring, punch-

drunk and gory. Spike cooed tenderly to him as he led him to his corner.

The referee walked over to Barney, and said: "I'll give you two minutes' rest; you fought six minutes."

"You will like hell!" replied Barney. "It's your own coin you wanta save, not me. I got him goin' now."

During the next round the men stood toe to toe and slugged. The blood had turned the black hair on their arms to a crimson color. Their lips were puffed; their ears bled, and their eyes were swollen. The terrible strain and punishment had given them the grotesque appearance of gorillas dizzy with the whirl of battle in a forest.

At the end of the round Spike crooned over Barney in a voice as soft as silk: "Gawd, Barney! What a man you are! You even got tough old Paddy Flaherty cryin'."

The Jaw-splitter's manager was saying: "No man could stand in front of 'im but you, and you'll lick him this round sure. You're the best man in the world, and this fight proves it."

The gong. A deadly hush rolled over the building. The Jaw-splitter rushed to the center of the ring. Barney rushed to meet him. The impact was terrible.

The Jaw-splitter sent Barney through the ropes with two awful smashes under the heart. Barney crawled back with a leering grin on his face. He sparred a moment to gain his bearings. He was boxing now, and the Jaw-splitter missed him as if he were a ghost. Suddenly Barney stepped in and crashed a left to the Jaw-splitter's solar plexus, and followed it up with a right to his jaw. He fell to the floor. Velma screamed. "Now, Barney, now, *now!*" Paddy Flaherty shook with excitement like a withered leaf on a tree.

AT the count of seven the Jaw-splitter's body was again upright. The two blood-spattered bruisers now lunged and lurched about the ring drunkenly. The canvas floor of the ring was covered with dark red splotches.

The sun had slid westward. It blazed down with even intenser fury. One minute and fifty seconds more of a round that it did not seem human beings could survive! Whoever won, it would go down in ring-history as the most terrible battle in the West. They fought close. Each man drew the other to him with the magnet of the hoped-for victory. The cool manager of the Jaw-splitter thought: "Who is that Irish devil? He's an ape from hell. I wonder!"

THE audience, now hoarse, screamed louder and louder. For a brief second, after a mix-up, the men whirled around like dervishes mad with pain. They fought close again, in one last insane and death-defying rally. Their breath came in labored gasps. They grunted as blood-soaked gloves smashed against raw and aching bodies.

Under the storm of blows each man sank to his knees. They rose, and sank, and rose again. As though recharged with new life, the blows were delivered with such speed that human eye could not count them.

It was impossible to tell one man from the other as they fought close and ripped tremendous smashes to muscle-lined stomachs that quivered under the impact of the blows. One of the forms sank down, and down. Another sank over it. They arose, by a mighty effort of the will, worthy of greater men in a greater cause. "You devil!" grunted one.

"Shut up," groaned the other.

They fought on and on until exhausted. At last their weary, blood-covered arms sank to their sides and they collapsed like tired children while the desert sun shone in their eyes.

The referee had counted nine, when one of the men arose and watched the other attempting to rise. Then the watcher's eyes went dark with pain. He fell prostrate in an attempt to help his antagonist upon the canvas floor.

Both men were carried from the ring like broken statues a storm had wrecked. Velma Hogan impulsively clutched the arm of Paddy Flaherty. Joy danced in the eyes of the withered old desert-rat. His strong mouth sagged with emotion.

Withered son, and radiant daughter, of Ireland looked in each other's eyes, as the broken son of Ireland was carried past them. No word was said by either one.

"Who won?" shouted some one.

There was no answer to break the silence then. And even a moment later, when the referee's decision was given, it was received with but little of the customary uproar.

As the Jaw-splitter's manager helped carry his limp body from the ring, he re-

called the words of an American fighter in Sydney, Australia.

"They grow good men on bushes in the States. Be damn' careful in matching him."

As Barney opened his eyes in the dressing-room, Velma was leaning over him. "Well, Velm, Spike tells me I lost the works by one count."

"Well," replied Velma as she brushed his hair back, "maybe you did; but I won a cave-man. Besides, I want to wear a gingham apron, and carry water for the ducks."

An hour later the fighters and their managers met.

The Jaw-splitter looked at Barney, and said: "It came to me in the ring where I'd seen your face before. It was when the gong banged for the first round. Your picture was in a Melbourne paper."

"Well, the biter got bit," said Spike. "What's your name?"

"Eddie O'Hearn, of Australia," replied the Jaw-splitter.

"The best man over there! What you doin' here?" asked Spike.

"I hurt my lungs in a fight over there, an' I was afraid of the quick con' like Joe Gans got, so I beat it for Arizona for a year."

"Well, you won," said Barney.

"An' that's about all, old boy. I'm goin' back to Australia where the birds aint so tough."

"Listen, Spike," cut in Velma, "get a new meal-ticket. I just made a contract with Barney for life."

"Blunders never cease," said Spike.

As they stood chatting, Paddy Flaherty alighted from a dust-covered car. He walked up to Barney and said: "Here, lad, is a prisint for ye. Ye earned it well by the thrill you give me." He handed Barney a small black satchel filled with green rolls of money.

Paddy went on: "I covered all the money ye put up, for I'd seen ye fight in San Berdue. I didn't get a line on ye then, but I darn near bet on ye here. Anyway, I saved the money ye bet. Ye both fought under other names, but ye fought square."

Barney stammered a weak thanks, and Paddy raised his one-time broken hand, and said: "Not a word, me lad, not a word. Nather of ye belonged in the dissert, an' I knew it. Ye can't fool an old fighter. Good luck to ye both."

The impulsive Velma hugged the withered old ex-pugilist.

"You're the best man in the world!" she said.

And Paddy Flaherty replied: "Tut-tut!"

The shriveled little Irishman of seventy-eight climbed into the high-powered machine. He was soon lost in a cloud of dust on the desert road.

Fighters, managers and Velma looked at each other.

"Well," said Spike, "I'll—I'll be—"

But for once even profanity failed him.

A NEW NOVEL BY J. S. FLETCHER

THE man who wrote ex-President Wilson's favorite mystery novel, "The Inner Temple Mystery," and the conspicuous BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE success of last spring, "The Middle of Things," has completed a remarkable new story of an even more engaging character—"Black Money."

Mr. Fletcher has a unique gift for the writing of mystery novels which are at once plausible, alluring and clear—it's always perfectly easy to follow a Fletcher story, even if there is a puzzle in it that is not solved before the last page. His characters, moreover, are always people well worth knowing.

The first third of this captivating novel, along with many specially attractive contributions by H. Bedford-Jones, Clarence Herbert New, George L. Knapp, Bertram Atkey, Charles Alexander, Jonathan Brooks and others, will appear in our forthcoming November issue, on sale October 1st.

LOU-LOU

A fascinating novel of romantic adventure, East and West, told with fine verve and spirit by a writer of exceptional skill.

(What Has Already Happened:)

BRIAN FORTESQUE, a wealthy and cynical bachelor of twenty-eight, drove his car through the storm one night to his remote little country hermitage in the California mountains. And he found there a beautiful foreign-appearing young woman, dressed in his own pajamas and bathrobe while her rain-soaked clothing dried. She refused to let Madam Grundy send him elsewhere for the night, and he slept on the hearthrug before the fire while she occupied his bedroom.

In the morning he discovered that a strange tongueless guardian of his guest had been present all the time, asleep in his woodshed. In the morning, likewise, the sheriff appeared with a private detective who reported that he was in search of a madwoman who had escaped from a private asylum in New York in company with a deaf-mute criminal, had taken a train for San Francisco and had left it at a water-stop near by.

Yet Fortesque could not bring himself to betray his guest; and he sent the officers away with the statement that he had seen no such persons. And when a little later his guest—Lou-lóu, as she called herself—told him her story, he all but believed her.

Lou-lóu, it seemed, was Caucasian—the daughter of the Arab sultan of an island beyond the Philippines, under the jurisdiction of the United States. The sultan had named her as his successor, but two powerful and unscrupulous men, Hamed ben Yusuf and Hvarson, schemed to throw the succession to her dissolute half-brother Zahri, on whom they could prey. To this end they arranged with Zahri that her homeward journey from the convent in France where she had been educated, should be through the United States. And in New York they had contrived to have her incarcerated in a private asylum.

The mute slave Barak, however, who had come to America in Zahri's train, had been faithful to her: he had stolen fifteen valued rubies from Zahri, escaped with them, sold three of them and then contrived to free Lou-lóu. Pursuit had caught up with them as the train neared San Francisco, however; they had fled into the hills

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By

H. Bedford-Jones

Author of "Darkest at Dawn," "The Brazen Peacock," "The Second Life of M. the Devil" and many other well-liked stories.

for safety and so come to Fortesque's house.

It all seemed too much to believe; and yet—Fortesque found himself promising to help her get back to her island kingdom. He set out for San Francisco on a two-day trip, to arrange his affairs—and to interview a one-time Philippine missionary named Luke Quail who Lou-lóu said could vouch for her.

In Quail, Fortesque found a remarkable and powerful figure, handicapped, however, by age. He corroborated Lou-lóu's story; more, he offered to join the party and help put her on her throne. As a result, a few days later the good ship *Pearl of Asia* left for Manila with Fortesque, Quail, Loulóu and Barak aboard. With them also went a powerful enemy, Hvarson. *(The story continues in detail.)*

CHAPTER VIII

TREHEARNE wiped his heavy jowl and started in all over again.

For a long while he sat motionless. He sat with the folds of his pongee clothes falling in damp sogginess about his heavy bulk. His white, fat hands lay absolutely motionless, without a tremor, against the black board of ebony with its painted letters. Beside him on the table lay an untouched cheroot—a thin, Dutch product brownish green as the hills of Sumatra whence it had come.

As he sat thus, unstirring through all his folds of flesh, his eyes alternated between the ouija-board and the open doorway. That doorway framed a vibrant oblong of color—color pulsating and vibrating in the intense white sunlight. At the top was a stretch of blue sky, very blue and unspecked by any cloud, that reached down and down to another stretch of fainter and more greenish blue. Here began the sea. And this reached down, too, down toward the bottom of the frame. A single thing stood out against this greener blue, a dark shape, the shape of a small schooner, dark as though stained with brown grime. And under this, again, a streak of vivid white sand. There was nothing else in that frame.

Presently the pointer moved under Trehearne's outspread hands. His eyes jumped down to the board and widened upon it. It was a board he had made himself, and he was proud of the shiny ebony, waxed into a dull glassy glow. Now he watched the pointer moving, fascinated by it.

His thick lips spelled letters, a word, a phrase.

"No more today."

Trehearne sighed and relaxed in his chair, in his broad features the look of one who awakens painfully to a misplaced confidence. He made an effort, lifted the cheroot to his teeth; then his hand dropped listlessly. Presently he would find a match, and after a little, light it. One does not hurry in Sibuko.

THE room was hot, lifeless as the stagnant air outside. White walls, bare and dirtied to the height of a man's shoulder; the table at which Trehearne sat; an untidy desk with litters of papers, and several chairs. All this drab bareness was scented with a faint and indescribable perfume that drifted in from the open window—it was a living perfume, an odor which few men had met, a breath out of the ground and the blue sky and the hot air. Long years ago some one, in mocking defiance of Dutch law, had brought a nut or a tree from the spice islands. The tree waved here outside this window, a strange and exotic thing even in this strange and exotic island, an emblem of farther seas and more tropic bournes, an unregarded thing, except of the birds, which came in chirping groups to pick at the ripened nutmegs beneath the leaves.

"No more today!" From Trehearne's lips broke a wheezy sigh. With an effort he lighted his match, watched it until it almost burned his hand, then suddenly held it to the cheroot.

"No more today! Curse the board. I've never had any luck with it, never. I never will have any luck with it. I'll never have another one like that I used to have, never!"

The word "never" seemed to droop upon his lips mournfully. The world held a somber mirror before this man of girth; the reflection was echoed again in his word —"never!" That word seemed to contain his future, his past, his whole existence.

Trehearne was the local agent for the Inter-island Trading Company. Once a year he saw a ship come in for him. Once a year he had mail from somewhere. Once a year he checked off his cargo with a Chinese comprador. That was all.

Outside there came a sudden commotion of movement against the sodden heat of the day. There was no sound—only a vibration. Trehearne's eyes went to the door hopefully.

"Franks," he muttered. "He's heard something at last."

Something black came into the frame of the doorway. So intense was the sunlight outside, that this dry and withered man in his white silks shone there black against the daylight; then he came inside, removing his white pith-helmet and striking the sweat from his brow.

He was dry and withered indeed, and his silk coat and trousers hung baggily about his frame. His face held the peculiar golden brown that is sometimes seen in the flame of very old and very richly cut rosewood. In the midst of that sun-smitten face gleamed a red nose, from which purpled veins expanded to the cheeks, but above, a pair of very brilliant and probing eyes. All the withered frame, the sapless body, were given the direct lie by those eyes, as though into them had flowed the whole vitality, the whole energy, of the body. Their color was indescribable; now it was deepest sapphire, now it varied abruptly and swung to a dull, shadeless lumping of grays.

"Throw away that damned ouija-board," he said excitedly, "and get me a drink. Quick!"

TREHEARNE stirred in astonishment.

"A drink? You're mad, Franks! What—"

Franks dropped into a chair and glared at him, then mopped his brow helplessly.

"I know it—but get me the drink. Oh, Lord! Everything's happened! I'll have to sort it out in my mind."

Frowning in perplexed wondering, Trehearne came to his feet.

"Did a bird come in? From Manila?"

"Two birds," said Franks, fumbling in his pocket. He produced a wad of crumpled, thin paper, so wonderfully thin that a great deal of it could be compressed into almost nothing. Covering this paper was a delicate tracery of lines that looked like the finest shorthand; and it was shorthand, for it was Arabic. That little wad of paper held a book, an immense number of words. Yet no more than two pigeons

had been required to bring it, so light was the paper.

"Why the devil don't you get the drink?" cried Franks irritably. "I've been sweating blood, I tell you! I'm all done up!" His voice shrilled. "Get it, you fat fool! I need it!"

"Nobody saw the pigeons?" said Trehearne, moving from the desk. "Rais Hamed?"

"Nobody." Franks dropped his head on his arms, sprawled over the edge of the desk.

Trehearne moved faster, at that.

He went into the adjoining room, where he lived. In the corner by the bed was a locked cupboard, which was very seldom opened. Trehearne fumbled at a key-ring, and opened the cupboard.

"Now, why can't he just say outright what's happened?" he grumbled audibly. "But no. That aint his way. He'll mull the thing over in his brain; then he'll tell a whole damned story, like he'd seen the whole thing himself. Terrible thing, to have an imagination—here! It's eaten him up, that's what. Why can't he speak out and say what's happened? But that aint his way. He's got to tell it the way he wants—"

He moved back to the outer room, bearing whisky, a siphon and a glass. These he set on the desk, then resumed his chair. He himself never drank.

Franks raised his withered countenance, the peculiar golden-brown skin drawn tight over the bones, and poured whisky. He drank it neat, then sat back.

"Bad news?" questioned Trehearne. The other made no response, but sat in thought. Trehearne sighed and resumed his cheroot, as though he gave it up as a bad job.

"Barak sent the message," said Franks suddenly, then relapsed again into silence. The fat man nodded.

IN the days of the old sultan, piracy had been profitable. In those dead days there had been a fine outfit of homing pigeons on Sibuko island. They came in very handily. An agent could loose one from Manila, for example, and the old sultan could know within a few hours just what ships were leaving, their destination, their armament; and he would send out the *praus*.

But now the old days were dead, and piracy with them, and the *praus* were rotting up the creek somewhere. Some of the pigeons were left—not many, but enough. Franks had taken them over, and he cared for them lovingly.

"I didn't know any of the birds were at Manila," said Trehearne reflectively.

"Yes. When they left, I gave Barak a cage to take along. No need to tell *him* anything!"

"That's true," said Trehearne with slow nods. "That man is wonderful. I wish he were here now to help me work this board. D'ye know, he could make it bring out wonderful things? Yet he can't spell a word of English. That's clear proof, aint it? Don't tell me this board's a fake. I know better."

"Oh, shut up!" Franks waved his hand as though brushing away a fly. "I've got to think. Barak's back in Manila. Queer things have been going on."

All of a sudden Trehearne stirred his bulk and rose from the chair and went to the door. Something had happened; some upheaval had arisen within him to cause that swift movement. Nothing less than a convulsion could have caused it.

Over his shoulder, Trehearne dropped a low word.

"Hide 'em, quick! Rais Hamed's coming."

The brown, withered hand of Franks fluttered out and fell upon the wad of thin paper. It balled up within his palm, and he thrust his hand rapidly into his pocket. His brilliant eyes had become a bright, steely gray.

From outside came a rich and wonderful voice in Malay. One would have unhesitatingly declared it the voice of a woman; its rich music, its sweet cadence, would have warranted the assumption that the speaker was a young and beautiful woman.

"May Allah curse all here, and may they be flung shaven into hell!" said the voice.

"The same to you," said Trehearne, moving aside, assured that the papers had been hidden.

AS Trehearne moved aside, any stranger who had heard that voice would have been astonished at sight of the speaker, who stood outside the doorway.

He was no woman, but a man—a tall, erect old man clad in scarlet silks, glittering with gold and gems, incrusted with dirt. A small gray beard jutted from his

chin. His upper lip, shaven, showed a thin, voracious mouth, bitterly cruel. His nose, once hooked, lay broken and askew. One eye was dead, the eyelid drooping; the other eye was black and terrible under bushy gray brows. The face was thin and keen, incredibly sneering and malicious.

In his hand Hamed ben Yusuf bore a long, slender stick of ebony.

His eye glittered on Trehearne, flitted to the profile of Franks, who had not risen, and came back again to Trehearne. His thin lips uttered a low, mocking laugh.

"I came to tell you something," he said, speaking now in English. "Sultan Zahri comes back to Sibuko—and he comes alone."

Trehearne started. Franks did not move.

"Alone!" said the fat man, his bulk paralyzed of a sudden. "Damn you! What d'ye mean?"

Rais Hamed chuckled evilly. Again his voice came, like rich music:

"I mean what I say—that Sultan Zahri comes home alone! Think of it, Christians; ponder what it means! You shall be swept out of this place as a holy man sweeps lice from out his beard! That is all."

"Come inside," said Trehearne dully. "Come inside—"

A frightful sneer crossed that face, so gray and terrible.

"Come inside?" repeated Hamed ben Yusuf mockingly. He made a gesture of derision. "Does your abode interest me? Bah!" He spat suddenly, a vicious thing to see. "Allah curse you and your house! This is my answer to you."

He leaned forward, and his ebony stick swiftly traced lines in the sand at his feet. It was white, fine coral sand, and the ebony bit into it deeply. In the sunlight, the lines that he traced stood out like black writing.

Then he turned and went away, striding with a fine swagger to his square shoulders. After him stared Trehearne, watching him go swinging along until the scarlet figure vanished from sight among the white houses.

"Come and look at this," said Trehearne, jerking his head. "You can read the scratches. I can't."

FRANKS came to his feet and stood beside the fat man in the doorway, his eyes burning down at those lines in the sand. There were three lines, like this:

ما دم
و هوا سم
و حمد بن يوسف ما دخل ثم

"It's poetry!" said Franks. "I've heard that the old devil could improvise. Listen to the swing and rhythm of it, now:

"'Ma dim,
Wa howa sim
Wa Hamed ben Yusuf *ma dakhul thim!'"*

"That's all right," said Trehearne. "But what the devil does it mean?"

Franks scowled. "It's about this house of yours. 'The water of it is blood, and the air of it is poison, and Hamed ben Yusuf does not come there!' It's a polite curse; that's all."

Trehearne wiped his quivering jowl.

"Damn the gray devil!" he muttered. "What's he mean by Zahri comin' back alone, eh? And he called him Sultan Zahri —why, look here! Where's Hvarson? Where's Lou-lóu, and Barak? You don't suppose that hound of hell, Hvarson, has tried—"

Franks caught his arm and pulled at him.

"Come inside and sit down. I'll tell you what I know."

"I don't like it!" said Trehearne, as he obeyed. "Why did he call Zahri the sultan? That fat fool isn't the sultan. There's no sultan! Lou-lóu's the sultana, that's all!"

Trehearne was not, like so many fat men, sluggish of body and alert of mind. Nor, like so many other fat men, was he alert both in body and mind. He was sluggish and torpid, both of mind and body. A thing penetrated to him very slowly.

Thus, he had completely forgotten that Franks had just heard from Barak. As he sank into his chair again, he was just realizing what the words of Hamed ben Yusuf signified—namely, that three men and a woman had gone away from the island, and that now only one man was coming back, vested with the title which belonged to the woman.

"What the devil!" he exclaimed. The astonishment in his face was succeeded by a profound emotion. "Why, it means that they've done something with Lou-lóu—that the young sot Zahri has—"

"Shut your fat head!" snapped the scowling Franks. "You always lose your temper a day too late. Lou-lóu is safe in Manila."

Trehearne stared at him, comprehending but slowly. "Why, Rais Hamed said—"

"Devil take Cap'n Hamed, and you too!" broke out Franks. "Hamed spoke too soon; that's all. Zahri is coming back here alone; he's already on his way from Manila. When he comes, he'll expect to take over the throne."

Trehearne's heavy features knotted up perplexedly.

"I don't see what you're aiming at—"

"Of course you don't. Will you give me a chance to speak, or wont you?"

"I wish you'd just read me that message and be done with it," said Trehearne, sighing resignedly. "It takes you so long to sort out things in your mind and make up the story! Hullo—there's that old pirate again!"

HE bounced suddenly to his feet. A flash of violent rage flooded his face crimson as he stared at the doorway. A hundred feet away appeared the swaggering figure of Hamed ben Yusuf, not approaching the house but striding along the strip of white shore-sand toward the palace, which was hidden among the green trees to the right.

Trehearne heaved his fist in the air. "Pirate!" he bellowed. "Thief and robber of graves! Old devil of a he-goat! You put a curse on my house, did you? Damnation swallow you!"

The Arab turned his head. His black teeth showed in a fanged grin. Trehearne, with an oath, caught up the ebony ouija-board from his desk, jumped into the doorway, and hurled the heavy board. It curved upward, sailed sweepingly through the air, passed over the head of the gray pirate, and with a final dashing swoop struck into the line of surf beyond the beach. Hamed ben Yusuf laughed heartily, flourished his stick and passed on his way.

Franks had observed this scene with unmoved mien.

"If you're all through, sit down and listen to what I have to say," he said calmly. "That is the best use you could make of that confounded board, anyhow; you've no business flirting with the spirits this weather. Lou-lóu will bring you a new one from Manila—she promised. A real one, too. None of your ebony contraptions. Now let me talk, will you?"

Puffing, muttering maledictions upon Captain Hamed, the fat Trehearne dropped again into his chair.

CHAPTER IX

FRANKS, who had too much imagination for his own good, was admirably able to handle Trehearne, who had no imagination whatever. The two men knew each other thoroughly, and each admired in the other those qualities which he himself lacked.

It was a fact that Barak deserved his name of "the Lightning." This man, who had no tongue, could write a perfect thunderbolt of words. When his powerful hand grasped a brush, it was as though between those fingers quivered a *fulmen*, a forked stroke of lightning, which connected with his brain and came to the paper in a glowing crash. In effect, Barak could write.

But since his writing was in Arabic, or rather in the Arabic characters of low Malay, that writing abounded in hidden meanings and florid metaphors.

Franks might have saved himself much work by simply reading aloud the message in a plain translation. In this event, Trehearne would have understood it vaguely, and would not have grasped its finer points at all.

Since there was extreme necessity that Trehearne should understand the message to its full, Franks now pursued his usual custom and gave the message his own interpretation. He told it in the light of his own imagination. He told it with one eye on Trehearne and the other eye on the vividly colored frame of the doorway, and he spoke in so low a voice that the words pierced to the ear of his auditor and went no farther.

"Something happened back home; what it was, I don't know. Zahri and that hell-hound Hvarson thought they had put Loulóu out of the way. Zahri came on alone from San Francisco, and for some reason Hvarson stayed behind until the next ship. Thus, Zahri is coming on here alone, as Hamed said he was.

"In the meantime, what happened? A good deal. I don't understand all of it.

"I don't understand, for instance, how Lou-lóu came to leave San Francisco in

company with a man by the name of Fortescutum. Barak prints out those letters as though he had copied them from something. It must mean Fortesque. He says that this man is like a lion, but very cold and hard. Then, again, some one else was with them. Can you guess who? A man by the name of Luke Quail."

A LONG breath escaped the listening Trehearne. His eyes bulged.

"Luke Quail!" he exclaimed. "Oh, my Lord! Luke Quail—after all these years! That's a hell of a note! Why is *he* coming? D'you suppose he's out looking for his lost child again? He was always prying among the islands looking for that poor kid, remember?"

"Oh, I guess he's given all that up long ago," returned Franks. "I imagine Lou-lóu ran across Quail and he took charge of her. We can't account for Fortesque; but no matter.

"They left San Francisco by the *Pearl of Asia*. That's one of the new China Line boats. Luke Quail has aged pretty much since the days we knew him, but his eyes are the same blue stars of the spirit, and one or two of the officers aboard knew of him, so that he managed to get Lou-lóu a cabin to herself. A difficult thing these days, I understand.

"Well, before they were past the Farallones, that first night, Fortesque was standing in a corner of the deck lighting his pipe. Barak was somewhere in the shadows, out of sight. A man came up to Fortesque and asked for a light. Queer, what a picture it must have been! The lights of the ship, the usual fog hanging in the sky over the coast, the long deck pretty well emptied, and those two men standing there.

"The man lighted his cigarette, and the match flamed out close to his face. His eyes went to Fortesque for a moment. Then he thanked the latter and went away. It was Hvarson."

"Hvarson!" repeated Trehearne in blank astonishment. "Hullo! Hvarson, aboard that ship?"

Franks nodded, and fastened his glittering eyes on the window opening where the tree waved.

"Barak recognized him. Well, the next day, it seems that Hvarson and Luke Quail met on the promenade deck—came squarely face to face. We can imagine that meeting. Hvarson, tall and fierce and predatory, and the old man with the blue eyes. Quail is pretty old, says Barak, and none too strong.

"Hvarson looked at him and laughed. You know that scornful, nasty laugh of his, which makes you want to murder him? Makes you a bit afraid of him, too; no use dodging it. He knew that if Luke Quail had licked him once, he could not do it now, and he laughed. But Quail did not laugh at all. He just stood looking at Hvarson, saying nothing. Pretty soon Hvarson made a sneering reference to their last meeting, in Manila, and said that he was ready to be buried.

"Old Quail merely nodded. 'That will come,' he answered slowly, with a queer flash reaching down in his blue eyes. 'That will come, Hvarson. This is only the beginning of our second meeting. The end will come later on. And listen, Hvarson! If you make any more trouble for Lou-lóu, the end will come quickly—very quickly! Mark me, Hvarson; step very carefully, for you are walking in slippery places.'

"That was all Luke Quail said. Hvarson made no answer, for he was afraid. He went away and kept himself hidden after that."

TREHEARNE shook his head, stubbornly, although his eyes were wide with the picture that Franks had set before him.

"Don't you think it, Franks," he said. "Don't you think it! Hvarson isn't afraid. He has no fear of anything on earth, in heaven, in hell! He is made absolutely of iron."

"Iron bends," said Franks succinctly.

"Hvarson doesn't," retorted Trehearne with ponderous insistence. "You ought to know that."

A frown of irritation crossed the dried features of the withered man.

"Anyway, Luke Quail warned him, and he obeyed the warning. He—"

"Wait a minute," said Trehearne. "I'm not through. You know why he obeyed the warning? Not because he's afraid of Quail, who is an old man and feeble, as you say. Hvarson went away and laid low, did he? Well, that's the time to be afraid of Hvarson, and don't I know it? That time he shipped out rotten copra, and I held up the drafts on him and refused payment—he took it and said nothing, just went away. Six months later

he ripped me up the back so hard that I was broke for a year—him and that devil Rais Hamed. Now, if he laid low, it wasn't because Quail frightened him. No, no! He was waiting to get here; that's all—here, away from the law, away from the world, where he'd have Rais Hamed to help him."

There was a silence for a moment. Outside the window, birds were chirping and chattering in the nutmeg tree. Franks looked at the window, and frowned.

"Maybe," he grudgingly assented. "We'll see. Well, they got to Manila, and Hvarson disappeared. There they found that Zahri had hired a boat to bring him down, and had departed. I suppose he'll get here in two or three days with a load of gin. Lou-lóu and Quail and Barak and the man Fortesque will be along when they can get hold of a boat. Hvarson has vanished. He'll probably show up here unexpectedly—pick up a native craft somewhere."

Again silence—a more intense silence this time, for suddenly the birds had ceased their chirping outside the window. The bright eyes of Franks narrowed into thin slits, and he lifted one hand in silent warning to the fat man. Then, rising, he caught up a brass inkwell from the desk and softly tiptoed across the room toward the window. Trehearne stared after him wonderingly, ox-eyed.

Without a sound, Franks came to the window. He peered cautiously forth; then a dry grin leaped across his features. He took a step, heaved up his arm and hurled the inkwell from the window. A slight cry answered the missile, and a moment later Franks came back wearing a broad grin of delight.

"Hullo!" exclaimed Trehearne. "Somebody there?"

Franks nodded. "Rais Hamed sent a chap to listen, evidently. I caught him right over the ear—the brass cut into his skull and set the blood jumping, I can tell you! Hear him holler? Any time you can get a sound out of these Moros with pain, you can gamble it's real *pain!*"

"Damn!" said Trehearne. "I wish you'd shot him instead."

"And have to pay blood-money? Not much." Franks resumed his chair, rolled a cigarette with deft shriveled fingers, and lighted it. He fastened his eyes upon Trehearne, exhaled a thin cloud of smoke.

"Now, look what's going to happen!" he said briskly, a thin, dry smile curling his lips. "Zahri is coming home, see? Alone! Thinking that he's the sultan! He's going to call together the council and tell 'em that something or other has happened to Lou-lóu. They'd have to make him sultan, of course, although nobody likes him particularly. Well, that's the plan. It must have been all planned out before they went away, to judge from what Rais Hamed said to us just now."

"I see," responded Trehearne anxiously.

"And do you see, old fatness, that the game is now in our hands?"

Trehearne looked at him, frowning heavily. "No," he said after a moment. "How—"

"Listen." Franks waved his cigarette with sudden gayety. "This hand is up to us to play like good ones, Trehearne! Getting that letter from Barak gave us trumps."

Trehearne dropped his chin on his breast. He shook his head. Over his face clouded a morose expression, a look of lethargic despair.

"No use, Franks," he said dully. "We aint up to the mark of these niggers; you know it. We aint like Hvarson. We can't take a gun, beat somebody over the head, shoot somebody else, an' then give our orders. We aint the right sort of men; that's all. This damned heat has taken the sap out of us, Franks. We weren't made to work in this climate. We're only a better sort o' beachcombers, hanging on until something happens. The life's gone out of us."

THIS was so fearfully true that the denial was checked on the lips of Franks—checked abruptly. It was one of those rare moments when men stare the naked truth in the face. Some may deny it; some may acknowledge it calmly, some may laugh weakly at it: but the naked, stark truth is there.

And the spirit of a man is betrayed in the way he meets the truth—in the denial, in the admission, in the laugh.

"You're in a cursed pleasant mood today," said Franks, his voice acrid; as he gazed at the morose fat man opposite, his bright eyes were a deep, sad blue. "Well, that's all true enough. We're dead sticks. We're afraid of Hvarson, and we're afraid of that devil Hamed. We haven't got the guts to stand up for our own color. We don't care about ourselves.

"But I suppose we have some decency, haven't we? It isn't a case of ourselves now. It's a question of chucking Zahri into his pigpen, of holding the reins for Lou-lóu. Eh?"

Trehearne raised his head. His face changed indescribably, as though the name of Lou-lóu had wakened something unguessed within him.

"Ah!" he said.

In that one "Ah!" were volumes of meaning.

"And," pursued Franks, "don't forget that Luke Quail is coming."

"Ah!" said Trehearne again.

A shadow of ancient energy seemed to come into his fat jowls. His dead eyes became more bright. His pulse quickened. A gleam of some old and almost extinct fire flickered up in his face, tightened his flabby muscles.

The glittering eyes of Franks rested upon him with a sardonic air.

"What d'you want to do?" demanded Trehearne.

"Go over to the palace. The council will be in session in an hour. The government was placed in their hands until Loulóu arrived to claim the succession. If that young hog Zahri comes with his story, whatever it is, and if no one disputes him, things will be put in his hands. Possession is nine points of the law, remember.

"We'll have to stand up before that council and speak for Lou-lóu. That's all. Tell what we know, and put a spoke in Zahri's wheel. It'll save things until Loulóu arrives."

Trehearne took a fresh cheroot from the box on his desk, and rolled it between his lips.

"I see," he muttered. "But Zahri don't matter. It's Hvarson—and Rais Hamed."

FRANKS nodded quickly.

"Of course. They're clever and unscrupulous. Between them they control the opium and so forth, and they've worked up a regular party for Zahri. Besides, Hvarson has his eye on Lou-lóu for himself, I think."

A violent flood of color drew into the face of Trehearne at this.

"If he tried that, I'd—why, I'd shoot him!"

Franks' gaze rested upon him speculatively, curiously.

"I almost believe you would," he returned. "But just keep cool. If we don't keep cool, Hvarson is going to trip us all up and land us in hell! You never saw him when *he* wasn't cool—remember that. Zahri doesn't count; he's a figurehead—a fat swine drinking himself into the pit. Drink and women, and enough opium to keep him quiet."

"That's their game," assented Trehearne broodingly.

Franks nodded to himself as though in satisfaction. He played upon this fat man as he would play upon his violin. Now he had wakened Trehearne's sluggish mind to action. The two men were thinking and talking in accord, in understanding.

"All right," said Franks briskly. "Shall we go to the council?"

"Go?" bellowed Trehearne with sudden violence. "Why, of course! What else would we do? We have to do it, you ass! It's the only thing on earth to do!"

Franks grinned slyly.

"Rais Hamed will be there."

"Let him be there!" cried Trehearne. "What'll he say to us, eh? Nothing! Just nothing! He'll be taken all off his feet—wont understand how we know so much!"

A chuckle shook the dry frame of Franks.

"D'you know what the niggers will say? That you got the news out of your magic board. A good play, Trehearne! They think you talk to the spirits. Remember how the old Moros used to crowd around the door, watching you? Remember? They actually think you talk with the spirits."

Trehearne glared at him belligerently.

"Well, don't I? Haven't you got messages yourself? Didn't you get a message on the old board from your brother, who died ten years ago?"

Franks shrugged his shoulders and rose to flick his cigarette-end into the sand outside.

CHAPTER X

FRANKS was what might be termed, politely, a retired gentleman. He was a gentleman in the sense that he did no labor, but collected old native manuscripts and played the violin, and lived alone in his house on the hill behind town.

He had bought that house when he first came to Sibuko, in the days of the old sultan. At that time, before the sun had

sapped his body, Franks had been a person of tumultuous activity and a great honesty of mind. It was a long time before the Moros could comprehend why he never told a lie, although he said frankly that once he had told too many and was now suffering for the fault. They did not couple this confession with the money that came to him every year.

However, the old sultan found Franks to his liking, and depended much upon him in the days of reconstruction. Franks steered him safely through the shoals of diplomacy, until the American régime came to look upon Sibuko with forgetfulness of its very existence, so little did that former nest of pirates trouble the world. And this was very good for Sibuko.

Franks and the old sultan grew to be firm friends, with much mutual respect. Franks wanted nothing, so, naturally, he could have had everything. As it was, his little house was filled with gifts from the old sultan, most of them rich gifts.

ONCE the sultan—this was in the early days—had gone about some mysterious business for weeks, making visits hither and yon about the mountains, and had finally presented Franks with a magnificent harem of five girls, the most beautiful to be collected anywhere. This embarrassment of riches had been refused with such delicacy and success that the influence of Franks had actually waxed greater in consequence—a significant fact.

When the old sultan died, it was Franks who had been with him at the last. Men muttered into their beards that Franks had had something to do with the tomb and its mystic inscription, and that if anyone knew the secret, Franks did. Some said that Franks would tell no one except Lou-lóu, when she came home; others said that Franks meant to grab things for himself. One day Rais Hamed bluntly asked him about it—his fingers playing, as he asked, about the shagreen haft of the knife in his scarlet waistcloth.

"The secret?" Franks looked him in the eye, smilingly. "Why, Cap'n, there's no secret!"

Hamed ben Yusuf, who prided himself on his judgment of men, implicitly believed that statement. He even scoffed at Hvarson, who suggested taking Franks aboard the *Gazelle*, as the schooner was named, and putting him to the question.

"He knows nothing of any secret!" grunted the old pirate scornfully, and Hvarson fell silent.

BECAUSE Franks had looked him in the eye and smiled, Rais Hamed had believed—he who believed no one! That was very singular. The reputation of Franks was partly responsible for it, of course. The two men were anything but friends. However, since Rais Hamed believed, he swung about half the population of Sibuko in line. The other half still suspected that Franks knew something.

If Franks knew, however, he said nothing, even to Trehearne.

The council, which held the reins of government from the old sultan until Lou-lóu should arrive, cared very little what had become of the great hoard. Revenues came in, and were ample to run the sultanate, with a little graft to boot. The coast gave pearls; the island gave copra in small quantities, a little gold from the creeks, much rice from the paddies; and if all else failed, the Chinese and Arab traders could be taxed until they shrieked. The only persons who really cared were Rais Hamed and Hvarson.

Hence Hvarson and Zahri went to the States to meet Lou-lóu and bring her home. Franks wanted to go, but could not for hidden reasons; Trehearne wanted to go also, but could not leave his job. Barak went instead.

Meanwhile, Trehearne juggled with the ouija-board, and Franks fiddled and wept when he talked about Virginia. The palace remained closed, except that portion of it where Zahri and his women and his cases of liquor lived. Everyone thought that the secret was to be discovered in the palace, and not a few searched there, unavailingly.

In the palace grounds was the tomb the old sultan had built for himself, not unlike the tomb of a saint in the Moslem fashion, as befitted one descended unbrokenly from a companion of the Prophet. There was a stone sarcophagus in a little pit, with a rail around it and a green cloth over the tomb. Outside was a large and handsome chamber, where the council was accustomed to meet.

Franks and Trehearne were speaking of it as they turned toward the palace, that afternoon when the message from Barak had come.

"I think Rais Hamed broke into the sarcophagus, afterward," said Franks reflectively. "No proof, of course, but he

and Hvarson could have done it any time. Figuring they might solve the mystery there, they wouldn't leave it undone."

TREHEARNE said nothing. He was thinking about the council. Franks gave him a sly look.

"Didn't you ever ask the ouija-board about the old sultan's treasure?"

"Eh?" Trehearne turned his head and nodded. "Why, of course! I never had much luck with that ebony board, though. I hope Lou-lóu brings me a good one from Manila, like she promised."

"Oh, by the way!" Franks took an envelope from his pocket and passed it to his companion. "Take care of this for a few days, will you? Nothing important, only—"

"Why," and Trehearne looked in surprise from the envelope to his friend. "Why, it's addressed to Lou-lóu! By you?"

Franks nodded. "In case anything happens to me."

"What the devil! You're not sick?"

Franks gave him a queer glance.

"No. But last night I dreamed about a candle that gave forth a perfectly crimson flame. I have had that dream three times in my life, and each time something terrible has happened to me. This is the fourth time. So I wrote a note to Lou-lóu."

Trehearne gazed at his friend with unconcealed suspicion.

"Are you makin' fun of me being superstitious?" he demanded. "I thought you always laughed at all of it."

Franks turned his twinkling, brilliant eyes upon Trehearne, and smiled dryly.

"My dear fellow," he said, "there are some unfortunate men who always laugh at the things they most deeply reverence, down inside of them. They don't want to laugh, but they do. I'm one of those men. Now, come along and forget it! After all, that crimson candle may have reference to my fiddle; I've put on my last G string and can't get another until Lou-lóu brings the stuff I wrote her to get me. Come along, and forget it."

Trehearne stamped on in silence, still not quite sure whether to take Franks in earnest or to suspect his words of some hidden sarcasm. He would have to mull it over in his mind for a time before he could decide. Anyway, it did not matter particularly.

The guards, stalwart brown men armed with spears and krisses, saluted and grinned as the two entered the palace grounds. Turning from the drive that went straight to the palace itself, they took the side path that led to the tomb—a white, simple structure of coral blocks erected in the shade of a group of tamarind trees.

About the entrance to the building were a number of people; two Chinese traders, some fishermen, a group of anxious folk from a hill village. These were waiting for the council to pass judgment upon cases of law. The guard before the door saluted the two white men smartly, and stood to one side.

AS they approached, the eyes of Franks lifted to that mystic inscription above the door; an odd smile seemed to struggle in his face. It was not strange that this inscription, which had been carven long ago when the old sultan was building his tomb, should have caused great perplexity to those who had failed to discover his hoard of treasure. It ran:

مالي في ضلي
و ضلي في مالي
أطمع لا تيئس
و تيئس لا يطمع

"My treasure is in my shade,
And my shade is in my treasure.
Search for it—despair not!
Nay, despair. Search not."

Franks murmured the words as he passed beneath the portal: *"Mailly se thully—"* And, as though the guard beside the door had himself pondered that writing many times, the brown lips opened and made murmured response:

"W'Allah alim! And God knows best."

Franks gave him a keen glance, then smiled and nodded as he entered.

Here in the council-chamber were gathered six men, the chieftains of the island; Rais Hamed was one. They all respected Franks. Five of them were as elder brethren to him. Only Rais Hamed surveyed him with a glitter of distrust in that glowing black eye, and a knitting of the shaggy gray brows. Franks gravely gave them the salute of the day.

"May peace be with you!"

"Marhaba! And upon you, peace," they responded. Trehearne, who knew

only a smattering of the language, nodded his head owlishly.

The six men were handsomely dressed, wearing their gayest clothes, their finest weapons, their most costly jewels. Excepting Hamed ben Yusuf, they were rather small men, very finely shaped. Upon them sat the gravity of elders. The dignity of this Sanhedrim was enhanced by the magnificence of the chamber in which it sat. The walls were adorned with hangings of brilliant silks and woven stuffs, so that only one space of bare stone was left exposed. This was the space directly over the teak door that opened into the crypt itself. Graven deeply into the stone above this doorway, and filled with soft gold hammered into the gravings, were the words: *"W'Allah alim."*

THE words hung there grimly. "And God knows!" they said, like the tag-end of some esoteric conversation. Those words, indeed, were upon the lips of all men, were applied to all things in daily life, and held a thousand meanings. Why the old sultan should have had them thus ingraved above his tomb-chamber, as though they were very precious words, no man could say. Perhaps in a grim irony; for he had been a sardonic and cynical old man, who had loved only one thing in all the world—his beautiful daughter Lou-lóu.

"We welcome you in an evil moment—may God avert the evil!" said the oldest of this Sanhedrim, speaking gravely.

"Allah is compassionate," murmured Franks perfunctorily. "There is bad news?"

A general inclination of heads, and glances toward Rais Hamed, who still watched Franks.

"We have had ill tidings," pursued the chief councilor. "It has been told us that the Sultana returns not, but that Zahri ben Muley returns alone to claim the throne."

The two white men were plainly expected to show surprise. They showed none.

"Ah!" said Franks imperturbably. "Who tells this news?"

"I!" said Hamed ben Yusuf, and his black eye flashed an angry challenge.

"How learned you it?"

"Am I a dog, to be questioned by Christian dogs?" snapped the old pirate; then he made a sullen response. "I have just come from Zamboanga, where I had a letter telling about this."

"Then," said Franks coolly, "the letter lied."

There was a general stiffening. Rais Hamed touched the shagreen haft of his knife and gathered his muscles—but fell back suddenly on his cushion. Not he had been called a liar, but the letter! And that was another matter.

"What is this, Tuan Frangis?" questioned the head councilor. "What is this?"

"I came to you with news that Sultana Lou-lóu is at Manila. With her is the slave Barak. With her is a man unknown to me, named Fortesque. With her—"

"A lie!" croaked Rais Hamed with a blast of fury. "Mayest thou rot upon a dunghill and be food for carrion, liar!"

Franks smiled at him dryly.

"With her, also," he continued, "comes Luke Quail, the Nazarene mullah—him whom you termed in other years Tuan Quail."

It is impossible to spell that name as he pronounced it, as it was pronounced by Arab lips. The name became softened, lengthened, accentuated.

AT those words fell silence—very profound silence. Rais Hamed put one hand to his beard and plucked at the straggling gray hairs; his mouth opened, and he gaped at Franks like a man thunderstruck. Presently, from the others, came a deep hissing breath.

"Tuan Quail!" they murmured amazedly. "Tuan Quail!"

"Exactly," returned Franks. "Tuan Hvarson and the fat fool Zahri tried to harm the Sultana in America. They thought they had left her there, not to return, and that Zahri might have the throne. But Tuan Quail has brought her. She is at Manila."

Rais Hamed leaped to his feet.

"Listen to this Christian liar!" he shouted hotly. "In the days of Sultan Muley, on whom be grace, this man was no liar; but now it is evident that Allah has touched his mind! How should he know such things as these? There has been no mail. *He* has not been to Zamboanga!"

That was a direct challenge—a good one, a forceful one. Every eye was bent upon Franks in frowning scrutiny. Franks turned and motioned slightly toward Trehearne.

"It is well known to you all," he said calmly, "that this *tuan* speaks with the spirits by means of a board. The spirits gave him that message."

"Sorcery!" shouted Rais Hamed, waving his bony fist furiously. "It is written that we be delivered from all sorcerers and weird women! Who shall believe in wizardry?"

"I," said Franks. "Because, today, I received a letter by means of the pigeons of Sultan Muley, on whom be peace! And this letter told me the same tidings."

Again, silence—this time a very harsh and critical silence, ill-disposed toward Rais Hamed. He perceived it, and dropped down upon his cushion. He was trembling, with mingled rage and fear and dismay.

No one doubted Franks now. All knew of those pigeons.

"You have known me many years," he said quietly. "You know that I have always told you the truth. Now I shall show you how to prove whether I lie or not! First, Zahri will come here, alone; he will come in a day or two. After him, very soon after him, perhaps will come Tuan Hvarson, also alone. But Sultana Lou-lóu will bring with her Tuan Quail, and the slave Barak, and the strange Tuan Fortesque. If these things do not fall out as I say, then let Allah strike me!"

Again there was silence. In the midst of it Trehearne plucked at the arm of Franks.

"Tell that gray devil," he blurted in English, "that Luke Quail will—"

"Shut up," snapped Franks.

The head councilor lifted his head.

"This matter lies in the future," he said gravely. "And the future is in the hand of Allah, the Compassionate, the Bountiful, who alone knows all things!"

"W'Allah alim!" intoned the others. "And God knows best!"

Again Franks saluted them with the *marhaba*—fingers to brow, lips, and breast—and turned away. He had given his news. Rais Hamed and Hvarson were completely blocked.

THE six councilors by no means enjoyed themselves for the remainder of that afternoon. Rais Hamed was sullen and silent, and presently stalked away to embark for his floating home—and men got out of his way as he passed, when they saw his face. The other five were distinctly uneasy. One of them, at least—Tembarak the Scarred, he who had lived long in Manila and served in the constabulary there—recalled the unpleasant fact of Christian baptism. True, that baptism had been discreetly received in Manila, without publicity on his part; the rub was that Luke Quail had performed the ceremony and was not apt to forget it. In Sibuko he desired to remain a Moslem. He foresaw unpleasantness ahead, did Tembarak.

Trehearne went down to the beach that evening and hunted long to find his ouija-board, but without avail. He could not find it. He looked out toward the reef, where the *Gazelle* hung to her anchor, and saw from her stern cabins the dull scarlet glow of crimson light. At this Trehearne, who at one time or other had reverenced the Church of Rome, furtively crossed himself and went home. Men said that when this scarlet light blazed aboard the schooner, Rais Hamed had bloody affairs in hand.

IN the morning, Trehearne was going through a stock of old odds and ends cluttering up the bottom drawer of his desk, and he came across a faded packet of violin strings. For a while he stared at it, and then a smile crept to his fat cheeks. What had Franks said about being on his last G string?

"He'll like this," he said simply. "I'll take the packet up to him."

He got his wide straw hat and took the little packet of strings, and went through town. Already the morning was hot. Trehearne strode steadily through the Chinese bazaars and the fish-market and the Arab bazaars, passed the houses on *bilian* poles beside the marshy creek, and climbed the little hill beyond.

There upon the hill stood the white cubicle that Franks called home. Trehearne puffed up the winding path, mopping his cheeks and clutching the little packet firmly in his hand. He came to the door of the square white house, and found it open.

Trehearne glanced inside, smiling to himself in anticipation. He saw the figure of Franks seated at the table, back toward him, motionless. On the table, to one side, was the violin; not upon its side, as Franks always placed it, but on its face. This made the eyes of Trehearne widen amazedly. And the bow lay on the floor—that bow, whose hair was so studiously kept

from touching anything except rosin and strings!

Trehearne suddenly felt a trembling seize upon his knees. He stepped over the threshold, but Franks did not turn. He looked around, and saw that the neat little room was in wild confusion—as though some one had overturned everything, searching frantically for something that was lost. And still Franks did not move.

Trehearne touched his friend on the shoulder. Franks did not respond; but the fat man jumped away, horrified. For the shoulder was hard and stiff, like wood. Then, staring, Trehearne saw paper in front of his friend, and upon the paper the words traced in black dried blood, as though scrawled with a finger-point dipped in the blood—*"W'Allah alim."*

And at last Trehearne saw the little knife whose haft protruded from beneath the shoulder-blade, and he realized that his friend was dead. The sweat-soaked packet of strings fell from his hand.

CHAPTER XI

TREHEARNE sat in his house-office and sweated profusely as he considered the general situation. He had been sweating ever since reciting a Paternoster over the body of Franks, and seeing that body disappear into the earth.

"I have no wish to be critical," he murmured, torn one way by fright, another way by impotent rage, and still a third way by grief. "But all the same, I think that whoever runs the universe has somehow made a botch of things in this affair. Decidedly, something went wrong—just as we thought all was running smoothly! I would give a good deal to know whether anything supernatural did kill poor Franks—"

He perspired even more profusely at this thought.

The death of Franks had thrown all Sibuko into horror, consternation and abject fright. That Franks had been generally known and liked, mattered not. That he was a white man, a Christian, mattered not. What did matter was the manner in which he had been killed. It was not called a murder at all; it was called a death.

There was a reason for this. Everyone knew that the old sultan had been buried in his tomb, had been laid under the stone, wearing his very choicest clothes and weapons. This had been a point of the will, which was steadfastly adhered to. Chief among these weapons was a long, old and historic stiletto, a knife the blade of which was inlaid with gold in mystic designs. One of these designs was an acacia tree, another a human eye, another a plumb and compass and square such as stone-masons use. This knife had clearly belonged to wizards.

With this knife was connected a history. Once, long ago, when the old sultan had been a mere boy, the armed *praus* captured a schooner and brought its captain back a slave. This captain, hoping to save his own life, gave the blade to the young prince, telling him that upon it were mystic signs traced by powerful sorcery, so that whoever owned this knife would have the protection of Allah. True, this did not save the captain from piratical true believers; nor did it save him from eventually walking into some poison-coral out on the reef and dying horribly. All the same, the old sultan treasured the blade through his life, and ordered it buried with him. The knife had been buried with him.

It was this knife which was found in the body of Franks.

THE inference was most dreadfully obvious, especially taken in conjunction with the words scrawled in blood before the dead man. Therefore the bazaars were hushed and the streets were awed beneath the blaze of the sun. Therefore Franks had been dropped into his grave, while the folk stood afar off instead of mourning decently for him. Therefore Trehearne, even he, sat in his office and wiped the sweat from his fat jowl.

"And he foretold it!" he muttered fervently. "He foretold it—the crimson candle and all! But he could not have guessed that the old sultan would have risen out of his very grave to do it."

That was it, exactly. One and all, everybody, from the council and the mullahs of the mosque down to the humblest fisherman, had peeped into that sarcophagus when it was opened. They had seen the old sultan there—rather, what was left of him, which was not a pleasant affair in its best aspect. They had looked, and they had seen that only the queer little knife of wizardry was gone. And before sealing up the tomb again, that knife had

been replaced, not without some little shrinking on the part of those who replaced it.

It was painfully evident to everyone what had happened. Somehow, in some manner, in some unknown word or deed, this infidel Franks had betrayed the trust and confidence of the old sultan. Therefore had Muley arisen out of his grave, and had avenged himself as he had been somewhat accustomed to do in earlier days. This could not be doubted. Hence the affair was not one of murder, but of death. Neither was it one to be reported to the ignorant Christians in Manila.

The curious part of all this, had any philosopher chanced to consider it, was that Franks, who throughout all his life in Sibuko had been a very model and pattern of upright dealing and honest reverence, was now all in a minute become an execrated memory. His best friends cast the first stones that arose in a pile of curses above his grave.

Unhappily, however, there was no philosopher at hand to consider the matter.

Trehearne did not know what to make of it. Himself abominably superstitious, he firmly inclined to the local beliefs. He began to argue with himself as to the probability of a spiritual and unfleshed hand driving a dagger solidly into the ribs of a man who was at the moment absorbed in fixing a fiddle-string. It was a nice question, with much to say on either side; and before he had entered very far into the argument, Trehearne was in a cold sweat, from which he did not readily emerge.

ADDED to this, Trehearne found upon his best suit of pongee, drops or smears of red, which had come from the body of Franks. He shivered and tore the clothes from him, and threw them into a closet, where he left them. His state of mind was really terrible, and it was no wonder that he completely forgot that in his clothes was the letter Franks had given him.

Neither Trehearne nor anyone else could imagine how Franks had drawn upon himself the vengeance of the old sultan. Common report had it that somehow Franks had betrayed the secret which he was supposed to know—the secret of that great wealth, amassed from old pirate days, the like of which no man south of China had ever known. Still, this was nothing more than bazaar gossip. If there had been any secret, it was wiped away with the old sultan and with Franks. The door to that secret was locked with the key of Azrael.

Trehearne was not worried about any secret; he never bothered his head with such abstruse things. He was worried, much more practically, about himself. He was haunted by the possibility that, after all, some human hand might have driven home that steel blade. Anyone might have done it, of course—a hillman wanting loot, a *hashish*-mad fanatic desirous of some Christian blood, a leper anxious for the spoils of Franks' house. Only—how would such a one have used the old sultan's knife, which had undeniably been buried with that same old sultan? There was the rub.

It occurred to Trehearne, very naturally, that he would like to put some pointed questions to Rais Hamed ben Yusuf. This worthy had, unfortunately, disappeared, and so had the *Gazelle;* so questions, as one might say, were entirely out of the question.

Trehearne sighed for his lost ouija-board. He even contrived one from a sheet of cardboard, but the rolling pencil told him "Nothing doing." So he gave up, with a sigh over the undignified slang which seemed in vogue with the other world.

At this juncture the *Gazelle* returned, on a hot, sunny morning. With her came a native craft from Manila, which sailed crabwise and made astonishing leeway, and which bore a fat, droopy-eyed youth by the name of Zahri ben Muley.

Trehearne puffed down to the white beach, with all the world and its wife, to see the home-coming of this venturer into far lands.

IT was worth seeing, after a fashion. Zahri was comfortably drunk, spilled himself into the surf and ruined a new silk hat, and came out dripping but fairly sober. Rais Hamed looked on with a paternal tolerance, tugged his gray beard, and gleamed in his coal-black eye. Evidently these two had met somewhere at sea.

Zahri grunted up to the waiting councilors and saluted each of them. He was somewhat thinned by travel, and a little heavy with opium. His flabby cheeks were golden brown in hue; his eyes were lost in rolls of superfluity; and he bore the gen-

erally malignant air of a sow that has been fed to the bursting point.

There was really nothing about him to awaken interest or to deserve comment, and he listened to a speech of welcome with very bad grace, and longing glances toward the palace where his presumably impatient wives awaited him—or his mountain of trunks. It looked as though he had bought out half the stores in America.

The words droned on, with much ado about Allah. The sun did his duty and flinched not. Nor did the gaping throngs, who had been brought up to endure the sun naked, and certainly did not mind his fury when fully arrayed. All up and down the white beach blazed the gay *sarongs* of silk, set off by brilliant vests, tipped here and there by turbans, and modified by the sober black or red of Chinese quilted vestures. Snowy surf lapped at the beach, and across the triple breakers, which were mollified by the reef, came the boats bearing Zahri's trunks. Out there in the blue lay the two crafts, schooner and nameless native thing. On the other side, the empty town, the green trees, the lush verdure of the hills that pronged carelessly into the sky. Trehearne, staring vacantly at the horizon, suddenly comprehended why Oriental artists made their skies deep blue at the zenith, and almost white at the verge of the horizon.

"Queer that I'd get the explanation now," he reflected. "It's very simple. That's just how the sky is, of course."

Of a sudden Zahri decided that he had listened to enough compliments, so he waved his hand and walked through the crowd toward the palace, with the scarlet vesture of Rais Hamed behind him. One of the councilors bellowed something after him in Spanish, which he comprehended much better than either Malay or Arabic. He turned and bellowed a reply.

"I came alone because I came alone! That is enough. Allah knows where Tuan Hvarson and Sultana Lou-lóu are, but I think they will be along later."

Trehearne, who understood Spanish excellently, perceived that Rais Hamed had gone out to meet Zahri, and had schooled him in what to say. So Trehearne went home again, with an uncomfortable idea that Rais Hamed was an efficient devil by himself, but that when Hvarson got here, he would have old Grandfather Satan to help run things, and then there would be all hell to pay.

THE following day Trehearne saw that the *Gazelle* was gone again from the lagoon, and he did not have to be informed that Rais Hamed had gone with her—somewhere. This made him breathe a little more easily. His fears passed into a profound melancholy, a grief for his lost friend which was real and very deep.

That evening, after his native woman had cleaned up the dishes and gone home, Trehearne lighted a candle at his desk and sat there, thinking of Franks. He preferred a candle, shaded by a gauze shade, because it attracted fewer flying things than a lamp. He sat perfectly immobile, staring at his littered desk, quite oblivious of everything around him.

Upon the white walls moved curious things—cockroaches, for instance, great creatures the size of mice, with long feelers and oddly rasping feet. There were one or two blotches of deeper shadow that hung perfectly motionless until some wandering cockroach would pass within a foot or two. Then the blotch of deeper shadow would uncurl and become a huge hunting spider, leaping up and out and down again as though the laws of gravity did not obtain for such beings; and there would come a gentle crunch as the cockroach died. This was an eternal comedy of errors, played every night with numberless diversities of plot and character; happily, Trehearne was not at all a sensitive person, and tonight he was not even aware of what passed around him.

Suddenly, however, he glanced up with a start, and saw Cerise standing before him, a white placard under her arm. She had entered silently, and was regarding him with a smile. Trehearne gaped at her, then jerked himself upright in his chair.

"What the devil!"

Cerise favored him with an adorable grimace.

"Is that a fitting way to greet me, monsieur? *Mille polissons! Tiens-toi tranquille*—I have business to transact with you; and there are few men who would not listen when I say that in their ears!"

This was very true—so true, indeed, that Trehearne relaxed in his chair and stared, quite ignorant that the young lady who viewed him so smilingly had received certain pieces of gold from Rais Hamed for the purpose of inducing her to transact this business with Trehearne.

It could not be denied that Cerise was

an adorable creature, gorgeously attired in a combination of European and Oriental costume. She was one of those beings possible only on the white fringe of yellow Asia, and Rais Hamed had brought her over from Saigon a month previously. Trehearne had seen her more than once, but never so attractively close.

Now he observed that her skin was like a golden sunbeam, and that the piquant beauty of her face and figure was only accentuated by an indefinite hint of Japanese ancestry, almost lost in the tide of white blood. Her speech was a combination of English, low Malay, and French that was interlarded with soldier oaths; it tripped charmingly from her pretty lips. If she were a trifle bold, that boldness was merely audacity, and was irresistible. There was nothing about her that was coarse. The most perfectly molded creature imaginable, Cerise further possessed mental qualities which lifted her into a class by herself.

Her fluttering silken garments were calculated to reveal as well as to conceal, and there was no one in Sibuko to object to this. The council, who were not at all puritanical, did not have to pretend that the sight of a marvelously rounded bosom or a thigh which would have drawn rapturous sighs from Phidias caused them any particular pain. And this manner of dress, as Cerise confidentially admitted, was very suitable to caresses.

Cerise was not often seen, except in her own little house behind the palace, not far from the dwelling of Rais Hamed. In times not so very ancient, her profession was considered quite estimable; and certainly it was not badly thought of in Sibuko.

TREHEARNE, however, rallied desperately, for he had no illusions.

"Come, dear girl," he said in stumbling French. "Come, *chérie, mon amour—*" He paused, conscious that translation did not exactly express his thoughts. "Confound it!" he exclaimed. "I have no business to transact with you, Cerise!"

She laughed very prettily.

"My dear monsieur," she responded, indicating the placard beneath her arm, "but you are mistaken! Now, if you will look at this—"

Before the astonished eyes of Trehearne she laid upon the desk a very fairly made ouija-board.

"You have the pointer," she said simply, "and I have the board. I have heard that you are not without some abilities in this line, which also attracts me. It occurred to me that if we united our forces, monsieur, we might obtain great results. Is it not so?"

Trehearne was astonished.

"Well," he said, "there is some truth in what you say, of course. I did not know that it was this sort of thing which brought you. I don't know that I can really object—"

"Of course you can't!" Cerise smiled archly upon him. "You see, I used to have a fine wooden board, but that was left behind in Saigon. Now, between us, I imagine that we might do a good deal with this outfit, *non? Sacré bœuf!* What might we not do?"

"What, indeed!" murmured Trehearne. He looked at the board and saw that it was very fairly ruled out and lettered.

"I am sorry that I misunderstood your motives, Miss Cerise," he said awkwardly, "in coming here. You see, I am not bent upon frivolity. In fact, I am a very serious sort of person, and just now grief oppresses me heavily—"

Cerise, like a deft surgeon, inserted the keen edge of her smile beneath this ponderous growth of speech, and amputated it.

"Ah, la!" she exclaimed brightly. "I shall sit across the desk from you, and we shall work together, eh?"

Trehearne considered this, and finally nodded with grave solemnity.

"By all means."

He set the board neatly before him, and upon it the planchette glider, and put a new pencil into the clip he used.

"You see," he explained, "sometimes I get a control that wishes to write instead of to spell by letters. It aint often, but sometimes."

"I see," said Cerise, and sat down opposite him in the chair Franks once had used. "But you must put away that candle, my dear monsieur! I never obtain *any* results except the light is dimmed exceedingly. I find the best thing is to begin in perfect darkness, then use a dim light when the control comes."

"That idea is not so bad," ruminated Trehearne, reaching out his hand toward the candle.

"And besides, recollect my reputation!" she added, without the flicker of a smile.

"Oh, of course," said Trehearne soberly; like the big ox that he was, ideas came slowly to him.

So he pressed his finger on the glowing wick, and darkness came upon the room —not an absolute darkness by any means, for outside, the moon was pouring down a silver radiance that swept star-dust from the sea and rolled it along the phosphorescent beach splendidly.

"Put your hands on the board," said the melting voice of Cerise, "and I'll lay mine on yours. By establishing a contact, *mon ami,* we increase the control, *n'est-ce pas?"*

"Ah!" said Trehearne, as her soft hands fluttered upon his. "I am not so sure that it does not decrease the control! That is, of course—but never mind."

"Oh, I understand perfectly!" she returned, laughing a little.

In that laugh of hers Trehearne comprehended that she did indeed understand —only too damnably much! Only too damnably well! And he perceived that he was a lost man.

CHAPTER XII

TO those who do not know, the name of Zamboanga means little or nothing. To those who do know, it means the capital of the Department of Mindanao and Sulu —the ganglion of the southern Philippines. It means direct and speedy communication between Manila and Singapore; it means country clubs and telegraphs; it means ice and waterworks, golf and the San Ramón Penal Farm; it means three hundred years of civilization which have left the brown Moros and the wild Bajaus, or sea-gypsies, untouched.

Hvarson enjoyed Zamboanga and its luxury of wild beauty, and especially its hospitality. Being known as an island trader, Hvarson was generally considered something not far short of a millionaire nabob, and was pointed out to new arrivals as a sample of what a man can do in the islands with industry and application. Just at present, Hvarson was applying himself to bridge with unusual industry but with his usual success. Whatever might be causing the lines of worry in his high brow, did not interfere with his game.

One evening at dusk Hvarson was sitting alone on the veranda of the Zamboanga club. It was a wonderful panorama that lay outspread before him. Off to the right, the government pier and the steamers, and the great bougainvillea and lotus vases and sunken gardens of the Customs and Department buildings. Ahead, the purpled Basilan Straits, with Moro fishermen chanting as they rowed their *sakayans* toward the village beyond the hospitals, or speeding and foaming under the bright-hued sails. Out in the distance, the Santa Cruz islands, touched with the last radiance of fading day. To the left, the Chinese pier and the swarm of native boats.

Hvarson brooded alone. He watched the great swarm of flying foxes coming in from the "batteries," on the islands, rustling like a great black cloud over his head and settling down among the *talisay* trees that lined the splendid canal fifty feet behind him. He could hear them there—everyone in town could hear them—making their evening meal off the wild almonds, scuffling, chattering, fighting in bat-fashion over the *talisay* fruit.

Hvarson scowled. To tell the truth, he was in rather a hopeless state of mind. His eyes roved over the lights of the sailing craft that crowded the harbor. Every evening he had been sitting here, thus, waiting, hoping against hope. He knew that if Rais Hamed came, he would slip in after dusk, and slip out again before dawn. But Rais Hamed had not come. indeed, why should he come—how could he be expected to come? Hvarson had not been able to send for him.

Yet here Hvarson sat, hoping against hope. And now, as he sat, he suddenly straightened in his Singapore chair, and leaned forward. His eyes were fastened upon three pin-points of light out beyond the crowded native craft, three pin-points that had not been there a moment previously. They formed a triangle, dancing there against the phosphorescence, hanging against the sky like stars low-drooping—yet no stars looked ever like these three lights, for they were scarlet as blood.

With a long breath, Hvarson rose to his feet.

TEN minutes later he was at the landing stairs, bargaining with a Moro. He climbed down into the *lipa;* the native shoved off, dipped his paddle. Silently the craft slipped across the silent waters, and threaded its way through the shipping, moving like a shadow across the phosphor-

escent water, where tall spars hung and swung back and forth against the stars, and men called to one another from ship to ship, and up on the mesa beyond the town the tall wireless tower stood like an invisible finger held forth to the outside world.

The *lipa* slipped along under a Japanese boat, where silent men sitting with fish-lines gave an angry mutter: *"Hayaku oyuki-nasai, dai-ben!"* to which pleasantry the Moro responded with the curse of Allah on all infidels. The fishermen were lost in the darkness, and ahead glimmered the long lines of a schooner, with a triangle of three deep scarlet lights hanging at her peak. They were not bright lights, such as would attract attention quickly, but very deep, their rich red glowing like drops of incandescent blood.

Hvarson hailed softly. The only answer was a lowering of the red triangle; the three lights were extinguished instantly. In under the side of the *Gazelle* slipped the boat. Hvarson gave the boatman a coin, handed him a chit already written, and ordered him to bring certain suitcases for which the chit would be sufficient warranty. From the schooner's rail, the richly musical voice of Rais Hamed explained to the Moro that this was an affair of true believers, and gently urged haste and discretion. The boatman trembled as he paddled back, for that voice was not unknown to those who plied the trade of the sea.

Hvarson said nothing until he was sitting in the cabin of the schooner—a stuffy little box of a cabin lighted dimly by a red light set within a skull, which was slung in gimbals from the ceiling like a lamp. Hamed ben Yusuf, gray and terrible, sat with his coal-black eye bent on Hvarson; a box of cheroots lay between them.

A grim amusement sat in the face of Rais Hamed as he tugged at his gray beard and watched the white man. Hvarson seemed haggard, stripped of energy.

"Has Zahri come home?"

"He has," said Rais Hamed.

Hvarson made a hopeless gesture. "Then everything is smashed. Not a bit of luck from start to finish. The whole game has gone against me. How did you know I was here?"

Rais Hamed shrugged his shoulders.

"Only Allah knows! I took a chance, and came."

"At the right moment." Hvarson smiled grimly. "I've been dead broke—spent money in America like water, and got nothing back. I've had to depend on the cards to pay my chits here."

"The cards do not fail in your hands."

"Very true. Well, I suppose you want the story?"

"It is an affair of business," gently assented the old pirate. "A report should be made."

HVARSON grunted. "A cursed bad report. Everything went all right—up to a certain point. Lou-lóu was adjudged insane, and locked up. We started for San Francisco, where I had arranged to sell the rubies. Then we discovered that the rubies were gone; so was Barak. I told you we should not have taken him! He took the stones, got Lou-lóu out of the place where we had put her, and somehow they got away. Picked up Luke Quail!"

His eyes darted to Rais Hamed, as though to seek some emotion in that gray face. But the old pirate remained unmoved.

"Quail brought 'em to Manila. Another man's with them—fellow named Fortesque. I failed to catch Zahri, and dared not cable him; the fat fool would never understand. I had learned about the escape at the last minute, and let him go on alone, you see. Then I found Lou-lóu and her party. Came to Manila on their boat, but had a few words with Quail. The game was up, and I had to lay low; that's all. So everything's bust."

Rais Hamed nodded slightly.

"Very well," he said. "I knew your story already."

Hvarson flashed him a terrible look, then laughed harshly.

"What! Have you become a liar, then? You could not have learned the story, Hamed! Zahri knew nothing of it. The others are still in Manila, or on their way to Sibuko."

So Rais Hamed told him about the pigeons of the old sultan, and Franks.

"Franks made me angry by spoiling things," he continued, shaking his gray head in sad self-reproof. "Also, it had come to the point where he was beginning to set himself forward. Allah knows we want no more men who set themselves forward—especially now that Luke Quail is coming back! I had stolen the old sultan's dagger from the tomb, so I left it

in Franks' ribs. The obvious conclusion was that the old sultan had slain him!" He cackled.

Hvarson bent a black frown on him. "I'm afraid you were a fool to kill him. I've always believed that he lied to you about the treasure. He knew something."

Rais Hamed gently waved his hand.

"No, no, my friend; he knew nothing. To make sure, I searched his place thoroughly. He knew nothing. I determined to make a clean sweep, and to take care of that ox, that fat son of Sheitan—"

"What? You didn't kill Trehearne too?"

"Why waste effort?" Rais Hamed laughed. He went on to give a concise history of the girl Cerise. In its way, the history was interesting; yet to hear it delivered in cold, prosaic words even made Hvarson frown unpleasantly. Somehow that history seemed to fit appropriately with the redly grinning skull overhead.

"So I gave Cerise her orders, and when we get back to Sibuko, that fat ox will be no more," he concluded. At a stamping of bare feet overhead, he rose. "Your things have come. I'll get under way, and when we're standing out I'll return."

Hvarson nodded absently as the other left the cabin.

He paid no heed to the thin outcry of greased blocks above, to the *pad-pad* of feet on the deck, to the little shiver that shook the schooner as she felt the breeze and trembled to its caress. He did not move as she heeled slightly and the water bubbled along her sides. He sat with his strong chin fallen against his breast. His eyes, however, were now blazing with their old fires, as though in the story of Hamed ben Yusuf he had discerned a new leasehold on hope.

PRESENTLY Rais Hamed returned, sat down and lighted a fresh cheroot.

"You failed," he said calmly. "Allah worked against you. To counterbalance this, Allah worked for me. You understand?"

Hvarson nodded, and a thin, strong smile hovered about his lips.

"Perfectly, Hamed—perfectly. We are going back to Sibuko? Of course. Well, I shall not go ashore; I shall remain aboard the schooner and keep out of sight. They will suspect you, but cannot prevail against you."

"Of course." Rais Hamed assented to everything. "You learned nothing from Lou-lóu?"

Hvarson shook his head.

"She knew nothing. When she mentioned the treasure, it was quite openly. On the whole, you did well to remove Franks. I think that he knew the secret, in spite of you; but he would have told it to Lou-lóu. As it stands, no one knows anything."

"Exactly." Rais Hamed puffed contentedly. "Allah alone knows! There was nothing in the papers left by the old sultan. There was nothing in the plans of the tomb to show any hiding-place. We know that the treasure was there, and that it dropped out of sight; that is all."

Hvarson sighed a little.

"Well, Hamed, we must work! There are many things to be done. The great mistake lay in taking Barak to America. He must first be removed."

"A fly is easily crushed against the wall, Tuan Hvarson."

"Then there are Luke Quail and Fortesque—a big and strong man, and no fool. I have been thinking over the situation during the past few weeks; a good many possibilities have occurred to me. Between us, we shall be able to chart out a fair course."

"Naturally. I knew that you would not turn up empty-handed."

Hvarson tapped at his teeth with his finger-nail—a habit that he had when in thought.

"It seems very silly to be talking about murdering men, Rais Hamed," he said at length. "That is not a thing which can be done much longer, even in these seas. I can make better plans."

"Very well; as you think best," said the Arab indifferently.

"It is even a little silly," pursued Hvarson, "to work and strive for the treasure, since money can be honestly got in other and easier ways."

RAIS HAMED laughed a little. "You forget that I have seen the treasure, Tuan Hvarson; and I am not of your blood. To me, those stones and pearls and beautiful things must be loved for their own sake, as much as for their intrinsic worth. And I think you will find you can use some of the gold."

"Oh, of course," conceded Hvarson. "That is quite true. But to me, Lou-lóu is more than treasure. I had arranged to

leave her in the madhouse until I could come back for her. Now the plan is changed, but the end is the same. We are working together, and we shall win."

"*Bismillah!*" amended the skipper piously. "The treasure aside, we must seat Zahri on the throne; that will be treasure enough, in time! I have arranged for a monthly supply of opium from the Japanese factories. By removing Lou-lóu, you benefit us both. A perfect arrangement!"

"But not yet perfected." Hvarson smiled, showing his white, even teeth. "I think that I shall return to Zamboanga tonight, Hamed, and not go to Sibuko at all until you send for me to take Lou-lóu away. And I shall need money."

Rais Hamed beetled his shaggy gray brows, peered from his coal-black eye, and nodded as though by some esoteric message he understood all that was in Hvarson's brain. He showed no surprise. Rising, he went to a black chest in one corner of the cabin, opened it and took out a package of American currency, which he laid on the table.

"There is half my money," he said simply. "If you need more, go to the broker Ch'ien Lu Lung in the Calle Felipe II; he has my remaining wealth in trust. I'll see about setting back for the straits."

Hvarson shoved the money into his pocket without counting it, took a fresh cheroot, and followed the other man on deck. The schooner came about, wheeling like a bird, and now heeled over a little farther as she began to run back toward Zamboanga.

On the quarterdeck, Hvarson strode up and down, hands behind his back, cheroot glowing against the darkness. Hvarson had many things to think about, not all of them pleasant.

NO one knew where this strange, dark man had come from; somewhere out of the Northland, with an energy and virile dominance that the sun could not sap. He had great character and many talents. Oddly enough, as he looked back over the grooves of his life, he found that it had been verging always upon great things, yet it had been concerned chiefly with petty things.

He was a trader. Once he had made a famous killing in bird-of-paradise skins, which had held him over many years. Again, in the war days, he had won hugely in cocoanut oil. These were the two main events in his life. He was well liked, and in Zamboanga held a respectable position. Elsewhere, he had drifted rather amiss, due to vagrant breezes of the early years. In Saigon, that charmingly deliberate Parisian model of the eastern seas, he had fallen foul of dark sins and strange evils, and this mischance had left an ugly blot across his memories. Always, up and down the coast, he happened to be most familiar with the wrong people, a fact which irresistibly and insensibly urged him into courses of action that were rather irregular.

He perceived that while at present he might be considered something of a nabob in Zamboanga, it was only a question of time until coast gossip would trickle through, and a single whisper would of course settle his hash in Zamboanga. No, he had chosen his course, and he must pursue it grimly and blindly. If the present enterprise succeeded, he could go to some one of the many parts of the world where ethics were of no importance—where it did not matter how you got your money, if you had it! There, with the money and with Lou-lóu, he could play out the game finely.

And to this man there were no illusions in connection with Lou-lóu. He knew perfectly well that to him she would never be a loving wife, a dutiful bride. He knew that if he came to possess her, all lovesick imaginings must be put aside. He would only possess her a short while, perhaps. Well, what matter? She was worth the striving for.

These things dimly surged through the mind of Hvarson as he paced up and down the dark deck, where the puttied seams made hard ridges against the unwashed planks. He understood, in a vague fashion which he shrank from realizing more clearly, that the long years had combined with the long arm of cause and effect to push him into a position of colossal selfishness, of harsh evil-doing. He somehow perceived that, to a man like himself, a man who had followed the wrong course until it was too late for his proud hand to swerve, the greatest attraction lay in the greatest innocence; he might destroy it, but he must possess it, pitilessly.

It was this principle which caused Lucifer to attack the very throne of God.

The distant lights of Zamboanga came

into view, and Hvarson shrugged his shoulders to shrug away the unpleasant tinge of his thoughts. His work lay ahead of him; and for good or for evil, he would do his work! At thought of Luke Quail and Fortesque, he smiled a little. He did not consider Barak, for Rais Hamed had promised to crush that man like a fly against the wall, and Rais Hamed had a name for keeping his promises—of such a nature.

CHAPTER XIII

FORTESQUE had been only two days in Manila, when he heard about the lost treasure of the old sultan of Sibuko.

Those two days had been hectic. Barak had disappeared utterly. Luke Quail had gone to appeal to a bishop, who knew him not, for an authoritative mission position in Sibuko. Fortesque found himself entrained by an enthusiastic Lou-lóu, who rushed about spending money, buying fiddle-strings for Franks, ouija-boards for Trehearne, gifts for all those whom she was to see again so soon.

As they were returning on the second afternoon to the Manila Hotel, in a *carretela*, Lou-lóu suddenly ordered the native driver to halt, and sprang from the carriage. Fortesque saw her rush up to a man who stared at her, and greet him; then the man sank to one knee and touched her dress with his lips.

The man was a brown Moro who wore a fez, bell-bottomed black trousers wrinkled about his legs, a green vest and a scarlet jacket. No shoes and much dirt! A crowd began to gather in no time, and Lou-lóu brought him to the carriage. She introduced him to Fortesque as Rais Sipek, a seaman of Sibuko who owned a small vessel.

"He is going to take us back, and we'll leave tomorrow," she hastened on breathlessly. "It'll save us hiring a boat, and he'll get us there quickly."

"Make terms with him, then, and I'll pay him," said Fortesque.

She laughed vibrantly. "Pay? But I have ordered! In my kingdom there will be no more question of payment, Forte Scutum! Tell him what time to send for our trunks, and there will be nothing further to do."

Fortesque found everything taken out of his hands very suddenly. What was worse, Lou-lóu insisted on bringing Rais Sipek to the hotel with them and engaging in a long audience. In the midst of this Luke Quail returned beamingly, with information that he had been given a definite mission territory. He too fell into the chatter of talk centering on Rais Sipek—talk of which Fortesque understood not a word.

OUT of this talk, however, emerged the story of the old sultan's treasure. Lou-lóu cared not two snaps about it, but that evening Fortesque and Luke Quail went into it carefully, and found it of only passing import.

"I remember," said the little man with the blurred blue eyes, "seeing that treasure in the old days. It was the sort of thing one reads about—a collection amassed through at least two generations of piracy and marauding. Eastern rulers go in for that sort of thing, you know."

"Is it very valuable?" asked Fortesque.

Luke Quail shook his head.

"Fictitiously, yes. The factitious value is different—flawed jewels and so forth. To the old sultan, however, it was a great treasure; he held it beyond price. The story Rais Sipek tells about its loss is undoubtedly true, for I remember that Sultan Muley was building his tomb when I was here. At all events, the old sultan has hidden his hoard where no one can find it.

"This treasure, or its loss, has become the sensation of the island world. From what Rais Sipek says, we may assume that Hvarson and Rais Hamed are associated in the effort to get hold of it. To them it means riches, everything! But to the rest of us it means little or nothing. We, that is, Lou-lóu, can get along excellently without it."

Fortesque nodded carelessly. He did not have his mind greatly set on treasure.

"Did you know her mother?" he queried.

Luke Quail turned and regarded him for a moment.

"Oh! Why, no. When I first knew her, she was a child of four; her mother had been dead from the birth, I imagine, for I could discover little about the mother. The sultan did not object to my baptizing her—he said the mother had been Spanish and Christian. He was a very cynical old man, that sultan—the sort of person you suspect of frightful jesting and obscene blasphemies. All the same, he was very

kind to me. I think that he felt sorry for me. It was not long after I came to Sibuko that my wife died."

He paused, his fingers working slightly, his blue eyes curiously bright.

"You see, Fortesque," he went on, a tinge of fever in his voice, "when I first came out to the Orient, I had misfortunes, sad misfortunes. I was not a young man then. My family were with me, sharing the hardships and the sorrows. It seems that there has been little outside joy in my life to share with anyone, but I do not complain. The spiritual joys have been abundant."

Fortesque nodded again.

"My career here began badly—the chastening was severe," went on Quail. "There was a mission station in Sarawak, where I visited and learned the language. It sustained a raid by the sea Dyaks, the gypsies of the horizon. After it, one of my children was found dead, and the youngest child, a babe in arms, was utterly gone; my wife was prostrated for months. That was as though the hand of God had touched us very bitterly; I do not know why, although I shall know in His good time. Not a year later, the oldest boy died of fever. Three in one year! Well, we did not complain."

FORTESQUE looked at this man in astonished pity. He wondered whether he would have had the fortitude to pursue his life-work under such blows, and doubted. Two dead, one missing, probably worse than dead, within a year! And he knew how Luke Quail must be praying to this very day for the babe that had vanished with the sea-gypsies, how he must have searched the seven seas unavailingly. Perhaps, too, some thought of this lost babe might have drawn the old man back to these islands when this present chance offered.

"Yet you talk of a merciful God!" he said coldly.

Luke Quail shook his head. "I'm afraid you've had little experience of God's mercies, Fortesque. However—"

"I want none—of that kind," shot out Fortesque. "All your life you've worked for this church of yours; and what has God given you in return? Husks—husks of sorrow and pain!"

Luke Quail put out his blue-veined hand to the knee of Fortesque.

"Hush, my dear fellow!" he said gently, a singular brightness in his blurred blue eyes. "Do you know what I'm terribly afraid of? That some day God will send you some real husks of pain and sorrow—for a purpose."

"For what purpose?" asked Fortesque, smiling coldly.

"To teach you that they are not so bitter as they seem." Quail rose. "Now, I think we'd best be packing up, if we're to get off in the morning."

"See here! D'you think this fellow Hvarson will make more trouble? Or Zahri?"

Luke Quail considered this question a moment.

"Not Zahri, certainly; rule him out. Hvarson and Rais Hamed will undoubtedly kick up some bobbery—no telling what. Hvarson is the more dangerous, for he is very clever, and his burning desire seems to be to obtain Lou-lóu. To what he desires, he will grapple with iron fingers."

Fortesque recalled his glimpse of Hvarson's face on the steamer, and nodded.

"I imagine so," he said, rising. "Well, that remains to be seen! Let's pack."

UPON going aboard Rais Sipek's boat in the morning—a queer craft that seemed to reel under her woven mat sails and to keep going only by the grace of Allah—Fortesque and the others found Barak there, awaiting them. Fortesque was not sure whether things were working out by accident or by some deep design. He had even been suspicious of treachery in connection with this native craft, until Luke Quail softly laughed at his fears.

Fortesque did not like the skipper or the crew. The latter were brown men who, instantly the mole was left behind, rid themselves of all finery and appeared in a frank state of nature, enlivened by scrofula, ring-worm, leprosy and worse. To all this, Lou-lóu was sublimely indifferent. These men had made it evident that they were her faithful subjects; she was entering into her kingdom, and from morn to night laughter bubbled on her lips and joy danced in her eyes.

"Confound it all!" said Fortesque to himself. "I suppose she was brought up among all this sort of thing. It doesn't impress her; she's used to closing her eyes to a lot of it."

Even Barak had doffed his garb of

civilization, and now appeared clad in a flimsy silk sarong, with a red fez cocked over his ear and a knife at his hip.

By some wizardry Rais Sipek steered his craft upon an erratic course yet made headway. The mountains of Mindoro swam past on the horizon. There was a stop for fresh water at an atoll crested with feathery palms, where naked brown men and girls swam in the crystal water, baited a stray shark with long knives and eager splashings, and danced on the white beach to the throb of wooden drums. There was another stop at a long and barren reef, where sea-slugs and queer crabs were exhumed, where a devil-fish was hauled aboard and cut up for the forecastle pot with much jubilation, and where one of the men, diving for corals, was caught by a giant clam and badly mangled before he was got aboard.

About the whole trip was a singular air of irresponsibility, as though the party were on some care-free picnic where nothing mattered, time least of all! The cramped quarters aboard the craft became a merry jest; the discomforts were laughed at. Instead of a girl who was going to reclaim a perilous heritage among enemies, one would have said that this was some brilliant butterfly on a holiday, with not a serious thought in her pretty head. Through it all, Luke Quail smiled gently and basked in the sunshine, seeming to drink in new vigor from the heat and the radiant day and the sweeping sea.

THE last afternoon, when Rais Sipek had predicted that with the next morning they would behold Sibuko, they encountered a *sakayan* filled with brown men, which ran alongside. The Moros scrambled aboard, hailed Lou-lóu with prostrations and glad shouts, and one very old man shook hands over and over again with Luke Quail. There was a din of confused chattering, in the midst of which Lou-lóu gave a leap, sprang into the crowd, and uttered a cry which brought instant silence. She stood there, flushed, angry, a strange light shining in her eyes, as she interrogated the captain of the *sakayan*.

Fortesque saw Luke Quail push forward beside her, in some agitation, and enter into the discourse. He caught the words "Tuan Frangis" and "Tuan Trehearne," and guessed that here was some late news from the island. Suddenly the girl burst into a torrent of tears and fled to her cabin, leaving the brown men staring and uncomfortable.

Quail rejoined Fortesque under the mat that served as stern awning. The old man was deeply disturbed.

"Bad news. Franks—you remember, the man Lou-lóu has spoken of?—has been killed. Trehearne, they say, has been poisoned and is dying. Nobody knows anything. It seems that the ghost of the old sultan has become angry. Bosh! There's something wrong."

"Ah!" exclaimed Fortesque. "Hvarson?"

Quail shook his head. "He's not shown up. Besides, he's had no time. It may be Rais Hamed; but we can't tell yet. A queer story, that ghost business!"

He repeated to Fortesque all the Moros had told about the dagger of the old sultan, how it had killed Franks. About Trehearne, there was less to tell. The fat man was dying; that was all; perhaps he was dead, by this time. No, Rais Hamed was away from the island. There was nothing to inculpate him in the business, nothing definite to go on—nothing!

"From what I hear of Rais Hamed," said Fortesque, "I'd waste no time stringing that bird up to his own yardarm—isn't that the correct phraseology?"

"Not exactly" said Quail smiling a little as he played with nervous fingers. "But the idea is sound. If there's anything to show that he's responsible, I think Loulóu will do it. If not, she'll probably banish him."

"Isn't there any other authority here to report things to? Any American consul?"

"No one. Among the natives, things aren't reported; they don't want Christians mixing into things. Lou-lóu is hard hit, I imagine; she had especially looked forward to meeting Franks. He was a very decent sort. I'm terribly upset over this thing, I can tell you!"

FORTESQUE saw nothing more of Loulóu until he was smoking his good-night pipe late that evening above the silver radiance of the stern, watching the glinting water foam and bubble in the wake. Then she appeared at his elbow, and her hand closed over his

"You've heard about it?" There was a tremor in her voice. "Oh, Forte Scutum!" She had forsaken the name of Brian altogether. "I'm so afraid—"

The fingers of Fortesque pressed reassuringly upon hers.

"Don't worry, little one. We'll see that you come to no harm."

"What? No, no—it's for *you* that I'm afraid! Everyone that loves me seems to come to grief; and you're so helpless among these people! You can't understand them, and—well, when I find that treasure, I shall give you half of it and send you home."

Fortesque smiled coldly.

"There are some things you can't buy, Lou-lóu; and Forte Scutum is one of them."

He heard her laugh slightly—a rather sad laugh that haunted him.

"So I've taught you that much? Good! I'm glad you realize it! All the same, I am sorry now that you came. Back in America, you were so strong, so wonderful—and here you will be like a little child. If you were a stranger and alone, Rais Sipek would murder you for that watch you carry!"

FORTESQUE did not find this estimate of himself altogether agreeable.

"My dear Lou-lóu," he returned calmly, "why do you display so much interest in my welfare?"

"Because I like you."

"Well, that is something!" He laughed lightly. "It is because you like me, then, that you wish to be parted from me?"

"I don't feel like playing at words, Forte Scutum," she answered. Her voice was somber. "I feel unhappy and miserable."

"Then turn back with me and leave it all."

"Bah! Be sensible. If you wont comfort me as I want you to—then wait until we get home and see what happens! I'm going to make Rais Hamed sorry!"

With this rather illogical speech, she turned away and was gone, evidently in some anger. Fortesque shrugged his shoulders. He was dimly aware that he had somehow failed to please her, but only dimly. He was not yet adjusted to the sweetly childish directness of her, and was afraid that he never would come to understand her.

WITH early morning, the boat was standing in for the opening in the Sibuko reef. A *lipa* met them three miles out, and finding that Lou-lóu was aboard, turned and went scudding back with the tidings, eager paddles flashing silver in the sunrise, springy outrigger leaving a silver streak behind.

Every craft along the shore—and the *Gazelle* of Rais Hamed was not here—came forth, while down to the beach flocked the whole town. There was a tremendous firing of guns and revolvers, a din of yells and cheers, a thudding of drums. All Sibuko fared forth to greet the sultana, and the surf was dotted with dozens of heads as swimmers plunged out. At the palace a flag went fluttering aloft, and rusty old cannon boomed and banged with great spluttering of smoke and aged gunpowder.

Lou-lóu stood in the bow of the craft—no longer decked in civilized garb, but now wearing a gorgeous length of gold-spangled silk, wound about her in native fashion; and as her deep blue eyes were flecked with gold, so it seemed that her black hair, as she stood there in the sunlight, was aglimmer with a dusky red shimmer. This dull gold in black hair is sometimes seen, but rarely, and Fortesque thought it very wonderful. Over the bows came a living deluge of men, from the water and from the other craft, all shouting fealty to their ruler.

But Fortesque, standing with Luke Quail under the stern awning, was not altogether at ease. For Luke Quail had touched his elbow, and murmured gently:

"Today, the girl whom we knew is gone. There remains—the sultana."

And Fortesque knew that the words were deep and true. The cocoon was broken.

The conclusion of this absorbing story will appear in the forthcoming November issue—along with "Black Money," a new serial by J. S. Fletcher, and many specially attractive novelettes and short stories by favorite Blue Book Magazine writers. Don't miss this great November issue.

Micky Free and Whoo Whoo

A tale of the Wild West, by the man who wrote "The Debt of Arizutah," "Fair-Enough Charley" and many other spirited stories.

By Clem Yore

THERE had been no rain for five weeks, and the dry-spell which prevailed over Big Basin was companioned with a heat that was unbelievable. The range was gone, and alfalfa and sudan grass entirely exhausted; beef was selling at a cent and a half on the hoof.

Every cattle-man looked squarely into the face of ruin, and all he got, in return, was a man-sized laugh. The banks refused to advance any money. When the bank and post office at Johnstown was robbed, every cow-man in the region thought it was the handiwork of the Lord squaring accounts with one of the crew who preyed upon all beef-barons.

Micky Free O'Malley was getting his twelve hundred white-faces lined up for the trip to the Big Creek country that night, when he heard the steel triangle outside the cook-shack door calling him to the telephone. Upon his arrival at the ranch-house, Micky was told by the cook that Barrett, the Sheriff, was on the wire.

"Some bird masqueradin' as an Apache cleaned the bank at Johnstown," said the cook.

"Why worry me?" said O'Malley. "Aint he got sense enough to know that the sun, the heat, the grass and hell have gone hog-wild and stuck me up too?"

"I told him that," replied the cook, "but he was so coaxin' I had to call you. He admitted it was just a half-dozen more than too many for him, a-followin' a trail over this hoof-marked, cow-milled and devil-dusted country. He's down to cases; that's why he phoned you. It's agoin' to begin to blow."

"Uh-huh!" returned Micky, at the phone.

THE cook listened intently, but all he heard Micky say was that he would come in at once.

O'Malley asked the cook, after dropping the phone, to shuffle him some chow and get his water-bags. In a few moments he was riding toward the village, riding light and leading a big buckskin horse. As he rode up to his punchers in the corral, he spoke to one of them:

"Dick, you go ahead with the boys and the bunch, when the cool of the evening

hits you. I'm a-riding after a bad *hombre* who just stuck up the bank and post office.

"I'll bet," drawled Dick, "that makes you so mad you could cry you'se'f to sleep laughin'."

"I'll be back," responded Micky, "when you see me riding in."

"Fly at 'em!" cried Dick. "You don't care what becomes o' you."

"Meaning just which?" queried Micky.

"That all you'll do a-tailin' a live guy, in this heat, will be to sprinkle your sweat in steam. Why don't Barrett perspire some o' his two hundred and forty onto these sands? What's a sheriff for, if a votin' population can't see him suffer once in a while?"

"Boy, there's five thousand in this; he tapped the post office too. I'll be getting a letter from Hube Work right soon, I'm a-thinking."

"Hube Work would have to be a-ridin' with me and a-mixin' gin rickeys ev'ry half-mile, before I'd be a-trailin' some fellow who hadn't done nothin' but rob a bank. What's this country comin' to, anyhow?"

"So long!" sang out Micky.

"Adios!" answered Dick. "When you can't sweat any more, start blisterin'."

There was one thing about O'Malley, aside from his good looks and nerve: he "strung single" on every thing he did; and so, after talking with the Sheriff and the witnesses, he had made it plain that if he went on the trail of the robber, he would ride alone.

The facts obtained by him were meager. The bandit had slipped into and out of town unseen except by the postmaster, the cashier, and the treasurer of the San Chichita Mining Company, whose pay-envelopes had been taken along as part of the loot. The robbery had netted about twenty-one thousand dollars, most of it in currency and gold, though four registered letters were also taken. The three men in the bank, which was a combination post office as well, had been forced into a rear room and locked in. Two hours later they were released. A posse had been formed and pursuit begun, but only after three hours had elapsed.

At a tie-rack across the street Micky found a peculiar shoe-mark in the dust. He rode south from the village, being of the opinion that the man who did the job would try to follow the moving cattle at least a part of the way, to hide his trail; however, Micky fully expected to learn that an automobile had been used from some point beyond the town. Telephone service to the south had been cut off since noon. It was rumored that a severe sandstorm had torn down poles—though after the robbery it appeared like the work of the bandit.

As Micky passed the home of Lame Foot, an ancient Apache who worked an *adobe*-brickyard, on the edge of town, it occurred to him that Lame Foot might know something. He called the Indian and interrogated him.

"Me see him—four-five hours—ride over bridge," replied Lame Foot.

"How was he dressed?"

"Had 'em on blanket—under blanket he wear 'em white man's overalls. Me look 'em in eye. You know 'em, Micky—you long time know 'em."

"Who?"

"Long time ago, big fire on Rio del Carmen—burn 'em house and barn. Kill 'em white man and squaw. Steal 'em ponies and cows and boy—*sabe?*"

"You mean—?"

"Half-breed kill 'em man and squaw. Heap bad-heart. Half-breed ride 'em bridge four-five hours. Stop 'em road-gang shop. Me watch 'em—steal tools. Ride 'em south. Lame Foot tell Micky, Long Jaw no make 'em Apache Mountains. Long Jaw heap fox—make 'em railroad."

"What kind of horse was he riding?"

"Big bald-face pinto—belong Square Bar ranch. Me *sabe* pinto long time."

Then Micky spoke to the Indian in Apache:

"Old man, keep quiet about this; I ride behind a bad-heart who killed my father and mother; I ride like an Apache. The Great Spirit will show me the way."

"My white brother has said it. Old Lame Foot shall not talk," replied the Indian; and as Micky thanked him, Lame Foot broke out into his English patois: "Give 'em Long Jaw hell!"

"Plumb hell!" answered Micky as he rode away.

AT the headquarters of the abandoned road-camp Micky dismounted and examined the earth around a portable forge. Here he discerned hoof-marks similar to those seen at the tie-rack in the village. The horse Long Jaw was riding had a right shoe of an odd pattern, made heavier

upon the outside heel, to overcome interference. This shoe left a distinct and distinguishing imprint in the dust, enabling Micky to ride and read it easily, from time to time. He rode rapidly, considering the led-horse, covering some fourteen miles before sundown. Far ahead, a cloud of dust bespoke a herd of cattle and horses.

"He sure never passed that outfit," mused O'Malley. "He'll be heading east soon."

In less than half a mile Micky was walking his horse; he detected the queer shoe-mark in the dust leading across a ledge of exposed rock to a dry-creek bottom which was deep enough to secrete a horse and rider—an arroyo running due east and west. Micky followed this creek-bottom for more than a mile, halting when he came upon a litter of paper, the remains of money-packages and pay-envelopes—also the four registered letters, ripped open and thrown aside. These he pocketed and continued his ride.

The moon arose early, and the stars came out in tremendous profusion, illuminating the earth with a startling clearness. The sky was like an inverted bowl, radiating a subdued light over the desert, so that Micky had no difficulty in following the tracks of the pinto ahead. Out of the creek-bottom Long Jaw had ridden, through the patches of tall grass, till he came to a heavy natural screen of cactus that crowned a bench running almost due north and south through the basin. This rim gradually rose from the floor of the swale, ascending steadily in the course of sixteen miles until it became a jagged tableland with sides that dropped precipitously two hundred feet.

O'Malley noted as he came in behind the cactus barrier that Long Jaw had stopped here and evidently looked back at the road running parallel to the rim. He must have been in this position when the posse passed going south.

From this point on, the half-breed's trail showed clearly, by the small dust-ridges surrounding the horse's shoe-marks, that the man was not crowding his mount. He was walking it, taking his time. The dust-symbols testified to the state of mind of the man who had so shortly before ridden that way.

"He's game," thought Micky, "—heading through the Devil's Grave. He'll drop right down on the village."

In two places only could a rider descend to the south; one of these, called the Devil's Grave, was opposite Johnstown, the other eighteen miles beyond.

Micky drew his rifle from its scabbard. He figured that the renegade had taken a chance on being pursued to the south, and had evidently confirmed this by viewing the posse dash by him as he watched them from the rim.

MICKY smiled as he read, in the tiny characters featured in the dust, the testimony of the bandit's cunning. Nevertheless he rode through the Devil's Grave with his rifle swung across the pommel of his saddle; he was taking no chances. After passing through the draw, he saw the upper reaches of Big Basin before him, and far away, the twinkling lights of Johnstown.

There was something homelike about the vision that recalled to his mind the nights on the Rio del Carmen when he and his blue-eyed mother sat in their doorway, listening to mocking-birds and viewing the glowworms amid the water-elms and mesquite. There welled up in his throat a lump that choked him, and a frenzy of revenge swept over him. The man he was hunting was the same who had laughed as he shot his father, and uttered a curse as he sent a bullet into the breast of his mother. Micky touched his horse with the spur.

The wake of the quarry's pinto ran straight, continuing until it came within a mile and a half of the village, where it swung to the north. At this point signs in the sand spoke a change of pace—to a fast trot. The earth was tossed up at the toe of the front feet and the heels of the hind hoofs. Micky cantered easily along the sage, for the course of the half-breed had but few twists and turns and eventually wound up at Walnut Spring. By the use of a flash-lamp Micky discovered the peculiarly marked hoof-print in the soft earth around the water-hole. But while O'Malley knew Long Jaw had come in from the south, he could not find the tracks of the pinto leading from the spring. However, he solved the enigma, after a few sweeps with his electric torch, and decided instantly what had occurred.

"Cute!" he murmured. "If he didn't back that pinto across the mud and plumb into the sage!"

Bits of mud flung here and there in the dust were found by Micky to be com-

paratively moist, and these reassured him that Long Jaw had ridden the pinto away. Twice within an hour Micky dropped out of the saddle and with his flash-lamp found the odd shoe-mark. It now told tales of fast riding—not a lope, but a killing gallop.

"He'll be breaking for a new horse before long," thought Micky, "—and he'll sure need him."

Day broke soft and cloudless. Doves cooed in the mesquite and greasewood; cicadas, feeling the warmth of the sun, fluttered into the air with crackling sounds.

Micky found himself almost on top of the Lazy Y ranch as the moon faded in the west and the stars dropped magically from sight. But on riding up to the ranch-buildings, he was unable to arouse anyone, and came to the conclusion that all hands were away, driving the cattle to water.

After caring for his horses he cooked breakfast, refilled his water-bags, borrowed four feeds of oats from the stable, and was about to mount and ride away, when a noise in the corral arrested his attention. Upon investigation he discovered the bald-faced pinto down in the corral, streaked with dust and quivering in complete exhaustion. Micky tarried long enough to toss a bucket of water over the head and neck of the pony and to carry another for its use when it had revived.

"I'll say you burnt up the ground," growled Micky. "No wonder you're all in."

He noted carefully the dried sweat on the horse and fancied Long Jaw had left the ranch only an hour and a half before.

AWAY from the ranch the trail swung abruptly to the north, the tracks indicating that Long Jaw was hurrying.

"Sure double-timing for the choo-choos," said Micky aloud. "You'll be riding yourself out of a horse by three o'clock, bo." All morning the pursuit led over an interminable sameness of landscape—gray and dust-swirled. The sun's rays fell with a pitiless intensity upon the floor of the basin, and shunting back with a killing whiteness and a burning heat, they weakened both Micky and his ponies.

The buckskin was Micky's favorite hard-riding pony, and he had saved him for the last stages of the chase, punishing the sorrel he had been riding instead. This animal now became noticeably weak. It was sweating profusely and trembling in legs and shoulders. The buckskin was practically dry and ready for the pursuit. At one o'clock Micky removed the saddle from the sorrel and threw it on Buck. There was something keen in the eyes of the buckskin as he watched Micky adjusting the heavy Fremont to his back. Micky allowed the sorrel to roll in the dust, and when the jaded animal arose from his wallow, O'Malley watered him from a bag, which seemed to revive the tired pony, so that Micky felt he could forge ahead without abandoning it. He took the trail at a slow trot, and the led-horse in a short time was able comfortably to follow the buckskin.

AT two-thirty the trail became one of extreme difficulty, and little progress could be made. They were now in the slate and shale country that lay some fifteen miles from the hills where the railroad ran. Micky had been over the ground several times and was racking his brain for the location of water-holes. Two of these he found, but each had dried up. He realized, however, that Long Jaw knew the region well, and probably was making for some spring or water-hole where he could refresh his horse. Slipping and sliding along, Micky followed the scratches of the iron shoes ahead on the gray-white surface of the shale.

He zigzagged the hillside rapidly, and before he realized it, he was on top of the first cluster of mounds. From this point the trail led in a direct line to a higher set of hills. Once the pinnacle of these had been reached, Micky could see the region over which he had come, the country far to the west and north, and directly below him, a path that ran to a clump of trees about which were water-elms, willows and spring-weeds in profusion.

He discreetly dismounted, and from behind a boulder reconnoitered that bunch of trees, noting particularly many fresh signs of horses. His own ponies, having smelled the water, were anxious to get to it; so that Micky led them down the slippery sides of the hill, removed their bridles and let them drink, while he swept the country for some indication of the herd which had made the signs.

He examined the hoof-tracks in the soft earth of the little moist bed, and these convinced him that they had been made by range or untamed horses. His eyes sought

the surrounding landscape once more, and this time he detected a moving cloud of dust outlined against the timber-laden mountains that loomed shadow-like on the horizon.

"That Paint Mountain wild herd," he mused. "H'm! Never knew a bunch of wild ones to be roaming in the middle of the day, unless something was driving them."

Full, swift, comprehension came to him: Long Jaw was driving those wild horses to hide his trail, or maybe leading them. This was possible, if he rode a mare.

Turning his tired sorrel loose to graze the water-hole, Micky broke down the hill and set across the flat in a lope.

Here and there other hoofs had covered and laid their tracks on top of the shoe marks of Long Jaw's pony. This meant but one thing: the renegade was ahead of that wild herd. Late in the afternoon Micky came close to the mustangs, some sixty in number. They stood with heads and tails up, examining him. From their appearance they had been traveling fast, were run out and covered with sweat and dust. They began milling about him, and it was with difficulty that he avoided them and turned his attention to picking up Long Jaw's trail. He lost fifteen minutes in this effort, but was at length rewarded by catching a human foot-print upon the sand. Close to this there were new hoof-marks leading squarely into the west —trim, shoeless, evenly rounded hoof-marks unmatched by any of the wild herd he had just left. "Pulled off the shoes with the tools he took with him," observed Micky. "He'll be putting them on again when he strikes the hills, unless I'm crowding him."

The foothills were but a few miles away, and Micky knew that at his former gait he would be among them, probably too soon. Of one thing only was he fearful—Long Jaw's discovery that he was being followed. If Micky could make the hills unseen, he felt he could catch the half-breed asleep or giving his horse a needed rest before the severe ascent of the range—on the other side of which was the railroad. With this idea in view, he reined in Buck to a walk, glanced at his back-trail, and saw that he was raising no dust.

As the sun went down, Micky entered the first of the timber and allowed Buck, without saddle or bridle, to wade belly deep into a cool mountain brook. He removed his shirt and bathed his neck, face, arms and shoulders. After preparing some coffee and eating a snack of lunch, while Buck fed, he once more took to the saddle. All that night he alternated walking with riding and with frequent rests, and at length he came to the pass, through which, he knew, Long Jaw must ride to gain the railroad station, where an escape was possible. The first streaks of shell-pink which colored the dawn revealed the tracks of the half-breed's pony in the dust of the narrow passage at timber-line.

"He's been a-riding all night too," mused Micky. "The first train wont pass here till about noon; now that he's over, I reckon I'm a-loafing the rest of the way."

On the western side of the range there extended for more than thirty miles a forest-reserve of fine timber, through which a Government highway ran to the flat-country and the railroad. Micky descended the divide at an easy pace, the tracks of the pony ahead pointing the way definitely, along that excellent road. He marveled at his ability to withstand the growing urge of slumber. He was fatigued and ached in every joint—but he did not want to sleep.

Rounding a sharp bend, a forest-ranger station caught Micky's sight. It was set back from the highway in a small bunch of trees, and the waving flag above it gave to the scene a peaceful and pleasant air. As Micky looked at it, a man came out of the door and walked to a woodpile, filled his arms and reëntered the building. Micky was too far away to distinguish his features, but somehow the man did not have the appearance of a ranger.

After tying up his buckskin, O'Malley crept slowly down and around to the rear of the cabin, where a small knoll covered with a dense undergrowth and a few giant pines, commanded a perfect view of the station and made a desirable covert.

There came to him, from time to time the subdued voice of a man; and after a while smoke curled out of the chimney and rose in thin bluish, twisting veils. Micky waited, with his rifle poked between two shrub-branches and his eyes fixed rigidly upon the open door.

PRESENTLY Long Jaw emerged with a water-bucket in either hand; and Micky recognized him, though more than twenty years had elapsed since he had seen that monstrous, malshapen visage, the lower part of which was an out-of-proportion and twisted jaw.

The half-breed went to the spring and filled both buckets. Upon the return to the house, Micky stepped from the trees and covered him with his rifle.

"Put 'em up," he said quietly. "And keep on going where you're headed."

"You want me to put 'em up with these buckets in my hands?" The voice of the half-breed was filled with a taunting tone. "You must be scared stiff."

"Mosey along, and don't worry about me."

As the Indian passed, Micky took his six-gun from his holster.

When they reached the inside of the cabin Long Jaw set the buckets down and asked:

"Where do we go from here?"

"You don't know, do you?"

"I'm askin', aint I?"

"I heard you the first time, and right now you're making a guess it's for that stick-up at Johnstown, but I'm breaking it to you gentle-like that it's for what you did to a man, a woman and a kid, on the Rio del Carmen, twenty years ago. *Sabe?*"

"Hell! That was in Mexico. What you got to do with that?"

"I'm the kid," said Micky, pulling a pair of handcuffs from a pocket. "Put out your paws, behind you."

The half-breed obeyed, and the irons snapped quickly into place.

"Now sit down," said Micky.

There was a ring-bolt in a log of the wall, and on a shelf a roll of baling wire. With these Micky had the half-breed trussed up securely in a few seconds, in a position that allowed no movement of the hands or arms, though Long Jaw sat outstretched comfortably upon the floor.

Micky noted that the bedroom door of the cabin was bolted. He picked up a gunnysack lying under the table, and opening it, found the proceeds of the robbery. He smiled at the half-breed. After a rapid survey of the room, he left the cabin and walked to the place where he had tied his pony. Mounting Buck, he rode back to a lean-to stable behind the station, dismounted and opened the door. Two horses were tied in stalls—one a large roan, the other a travel-stained pinto.

THE extra horse made Micky do some fast thinking. He blamed himself for leaving the cabin without a more complete examination. Now he imagined he would have to put up a fight—for the half-breed had apparently met a confederate who was near by or inside the station.

He looked at the roan. Surely this was not a ranger's horse—the saddle was too fancy and delicately mounted. He pulled Buck through the door, haltered him with a crude hackamore, and then cautiously entered the cabin.

"Whose horse is that in the lean-to?" he asked Long Jaw. The outlaw nodded with his head toward the bolted door.

Micky slid back the bolt and peered into the room. Stretched full length on the bed was—a girl.

The sight so surprised Micky that in his amazement he did not hear the half-breed say: "Some dame, eh?"

O'Malley entered the room and stared at the trim little figure, attired in riding breeches, purple blouse, tam o' shanter and fine boots, her face half hidden in a mass of nut-brown hair which had tumbled over it. Her closed eyes were fringed with long lashes, which lay upon her cheeks heavy and night black. How had she come here? Micky turned back to the half-breed.

"Where did you get her?" he demanded.

"Picked her up at daybreak. She was wanderin' above timber-line. She must be cuckoo, for she took one wild look at me, and I haven't been able to get a word out of her since I brought her here. She's been sleepin' ever since she went into that room."

"You're shooting square now?" There was a metallic harshness to the question.

"What you think? That kind o' calico aint my style. Besides, she's just a kid."

"I'm not thinkin'. I'm asking."

"I'm givin' it to you on the level. Ask her. I brought her down to the timber and tied her up; then I came on here and read a note on the door, left by the ranger. He said he wouldn't be back today, so I just went back, unroped her, and when we got here, she went in there."

Micky surveyed the finely molded face, half turned from him, and caught a slight, spasmodic twitching of the lips, which were tinged with an unreal shade partly purple and damask, as though the blood had stagnated there. He raised one of her hands and let the arm fall. It struck the bed with a thud, the passivity of the unconscious.

Then—somewhere back in Micky's brain there flashed a picture as from some half-forgotten dream. His imagination recalled a similar setting. The identical face and exquisite hair, all tumbled and blown, as

if by the wild night-wind of the desert. There she lay, the dream-ideal—the picture of the kind of woman he always conjured up when he thought of womankind.

Softly he closed the door and approached the half-breed.

"How do you bring a person to, who has been frightened, like her?" he asked.

"Slap 'em with cold water."

"That will shock."

"Try warm water, then. Say, what you think I am, anyway."

The suggestion was accepted by Micky. He made a fire, and when water was hot, filled a basin from the kettle, found a towel and entered the girl's room. She had not changed position, he observed, as he placed the bowl on a chair and sat down on the edge of the bed.

Brushing her hair from her face and forehead, he wet the towel and softly laid it over her eyes. She did not respond.

Three times was the hot compress applied without effect.

Gently he raised her head, to wipe away the water that had dripped upon her face, and in doing this he felt her breath upon his hand.

He took her wrist, but was unable to catch the pulse, though he heard his own heart pounding against his ribs, with a great hollow sound of desolation, remindful of the loneliness of hours spent while riding night-herd and the sighing of the wind that always comes most mournfully immediately before dawn.

He was not used to women or the thoughts of women. But now, before his eyes and in his heart there was a disquieting and tumultuous confusion. He was carried out of that room, as surely, for the moment, as ever in a dream; and before he realized what he was doing, he had pressed upon her lips a long and tender kiss. There swept over the girl an almost imperceptible tremor, as from a draught of chilled air. He withdrew his lips from hers and let her head drop softly on the pillow; she opened her eyes and looked at him with a startled and terrified expression, which spread over her face, distorting it in all the shadings and aspects of fear, so that he was shocked by what he saw, and quickly arose from the bed and stood looking down at her.

"Please pardon me, miss," he said. "I plumb forgot myself. I—you were—I was just naturally swept away. I sure didn't mean to take advantage of you. I didn't mean anything—"

She tried to answer him, but failed. A flush crept to her cheeks and made them carmine for an instant.

Her eyes filled with tears, and she rolled her head on the pillow till her face was partially hidden, and wept.

"I'm just plain polecat, miss," he said as he left the room and noiselessly closed the door.

IN a cupboard beside the stove he found oatmeal, bacon, flour, a can of peaches, condensed milk, sugar and tea. With these he set about making breakfast; this done, he placed food on a small table and carried it to the girl. "I wish you would eat something," he said. "I'm sure a rotten *chef*, but it will show you have forgotten and forgiven—what I did.

"And," he continued as though it were an afterthought, "I want to leave this with you—just to prove to you that I don't belong to that half-breed outside. He belongs to me—I've got him tied up to the wall."

He drew his gun and laid it on the table, then turned and walked from the room.

"Want anything to eat?" he asked Long Jaw.

The half-breed made no reply. From all indications he was in a deep sleep. Paying no further attention, Micky set about getting breakfast for himself.

A telephone-bell sounded three times in the room—which so surprised O'Malley that for a few seconds he could not locate the box. When he did find it, and had taken down the receiver, he was about to say "Hello!" when he heard voices over the wire.

Long Jaw opened his eyes cautiously and saw quickly the empty holster hanging on Micky's hip. One look sufficed for his purpose. O'Malley was surprised as he caught the drift of the conversation over the wire:

"She left here yesterday morning, to gather flowers up on Elk Mountain, and we haven't found a sign of her yet. Can't you get the boys on the Troublesome to hunt for her? She may have dropped down on that side and be wandering about in the down-timber along Mill Creek."

"Of course, Mrs. Hartley; we'll get busy right away," came the reply.

"And Al—take along some food; my little girl must be nearly starved."

"Don't you worry none, now, Mrs. Hartley. We know what to do—don't you worry none."

At this point Micky interrupted. "Hello, there!" he said.

"Get off the line please?"

"Just a minute, ma'am; I'm wanting to tell you about a girl I found. She may be yours."

"Who are you?"

"Micky Free O'Malley, from the Big Basin country."

"Big Basin? How did you get in on this wire."

"I'm at a ranger station. Wait a minute, and I'll give you the number."

From a card attached to the telephone he read and repeated these words. "Forest Reserve Station Number Three. Telephone Number Thrity-six R Four."

"You say there's a girl with you?"

"Yes."

"What does she look like?"

"Prettiest you ever saw. Big black eyes, brown hair, purple blouse, riding trousers and tan boots. She's been riding a big roan saddled with a silver-mounted Heyser."

"That's Whoo Whoo!" was shrieked over the wire.

"Who?"

"Whoo Whoo," replied the woman. "We'll be right over in the car. We're only twenty-six miles away. It'll take us about an hour. Is she all right?"

"All right? I'll say she is, and I've just brought her breakfast to her. And, ma'am, when you come, bring some boys with you. I've caught Long Jaw, who held up the bank at Johnstown. That's how I came to be on this side. I trailed him here and found your daughter in this cabin."

"Who did you say you had captured?"

"Long Jaw, a half-breed Apache, from the country south of Nogales."

"Oh, my God!" cried Mrs. Hartley. "Tell Whoo Whoo we'll not be long."

"You'll not be a-wantin' us then, Mrs. Hartley?" cut in the other voice on the wire.

"No, thank you, Al, I think we've found her." Mrs. Hartley hung up the receiver.

MICKY walked to the room of the girl. "I guess you heard what I said," he observed without looking at her.

"Your mother was sure worried. She'll be over right away. I wish I could make you understand what it was that made me do—what I did. But I reckon some men just naturally ball up everything they do."

She did not answer, but he saw a strange sparkling light in her eyes as she picked up his gun and extended it to him. He shook his head in refusal, and without taking it, left the room.

He glanced toward the half-breed, who appeared to be in the same sound sleep, for now he was snoring loudly.

"Gee!" he yawned. "I don't want to eat; I want to sleep—a whole bale of sleep."

He walked to a cot in the corner of the room, threw himself upon it and looked at the roof, along which crawled a large black spider.

"Good luck!" he thought, and closed his eyes.

In his slumber he dreamed he was riding the heated sands of the desert once more, at tremendous speed, and by his side was Whoo Whoo, with hair a-flying and dancing eyes. Ever in front of him was Long Jaw and the Lazy Y pony, on which he was standing upright, cavorting in grotesque antics and shouting back maddening taunts at him.

LONG JAW listened acutely for the sounds of Micky's breathing that would proclaim him asleep. He had heard the name of Hartley and the words Micky had spoken over the wire, and he knew that within a brief time the cabin would be filled with those it were better he should not meet. He was about to sit up when he heard Whoo Whoo move in her room. He also heard her come out of the door and approach the cot on which Micky was sleeping. Occasionally she glanced toward the half-breed and saw that he had slipped sidewise, only the wire attached to the handcuffs kept him from falling to the floor.

She turned and bent over Micky, then deliberately stood off and took in every feature of his handsome face.

"Turn about is fair-play." She knelt beside the cot, swiftly kissed him on the lips and then with flaming cheeks ran from the cabin.

She sat on a bench, outside the station, for more than an hour, before she saw, far down the road, on a switch-back, the top of her father's car. From afar came the hum of the motor, ringing about the roof of the station and above the silent murmur of wind across tree-tops. A

crested-mountain jay fluttered about the gable of the cabin, and a camp-robber hopped audaciously around the door.

"Love at first sight!" she asked herself. "Ridiculous! And yet?"

Around a curve, half a mile away, came sweeping the high-powered auto in a cloud of dust; she now resented the mechanical intrusion of that sharply churning engine.

Mother and father? Of course? But there on the cot within the cabin—there was her heart and her mind.

The machine was approaching rapidly. She was on the point of rushing to the road to greet them, when intuition halted her. She arose from the bench and hastened into the cabin. Long Jaw appeared to have changed position; and puzzled, she passed him and went to her room, where she stood with her back to the door, irresolute.

Long Jaw was one of those freaks of nature, whose wrists are larger than their hands; taking advantage of this condition, he had slipped the handcuffs along and over his lower hand and knuckles, while Whoo Whoo sat on the bench. This effort had consumed over an hour of painful strain, owing to the rigid posture in which the wire held the cuffs. But he had been successful, and was about to arise when she suddenly appeared.

Fear of her outcry made him continue to simulate sleep. But after she entered her room, he heard the car and realized that he must act quickly if he was to secure the gun Micky had taken from him and which now lay on a cupboard shelf. He sprang to his feet with no attempt at caution, and rushed to the spot where his gun was lying. The noise he made in doing this startled Whoo Whoo; she snatched up the pistol Micky had left and swung around facing the door.

Long Jaw after securing his own gun, jumped into the center of the room and covered Micky with the weapon.

O'Malley stirred in his sleep; and Whoo Whoo, taking in both the sleeping man and Long Jaw, heard Micky murmur.

"I want you to forgive me, Whoo Whoo. I was swept off my feet. I—"

The muzzle of the gun held by the half-breed was slowly coming down to a line that intersected the upper body of Micky—and simultaneously the pistol in the girl's hand rose to cover the shoulder of the half-breed.

"Micky—Micky!" she screamed—and fired.

The half-breed was slipping to the floor just as O'Malley, awakened by the heavy report, sprang from the cot and caught Whoo Whoo as she swayed toward him, the smoking gun still in her hand. He reached her and steadied her at the instant Mrs. Hartley and her husband rushed into the room.

THE eyes of Whoo Whoo's mother went first to the spot where the half-breed was writhing on the floor, his free hand grasping his shoulder; the gun he had raised was now lying under the cot.

Repulsion, fear, hatred and anger were sweeping over the face of the woman at sight of the hideous countenance of the half-breed, when Whoo Whoo turned from Micky and rushed toward her.

"Mother! Oh, Mother!" she said in a strangely appealing voice. Mrs. Hartley raised her eyes till they met those of her child; then she turned deadly pale and would have fallen had Whoo Whoo not caught her.

"That half-breed is only wounded," Micky explained. "Whoo Whoo got him just in time to save me, and perhaps you folks. He's sure a bad one, but he'll soon be a plumb good Indian. Did the sight of him make you faint?"

"No, it wasn't that," Mrs. Hartley replied. "It was Whoo Whoo. She spoke to me for the first time since she was stricken dumb?"

"Dumb?" cried Micky in amazement.

"Yes—dumb," explained Mr. Hartley. "Seven years ago that devil kidnaped her and her mother and held them in the mountains of Sonora until I ransomed them. The first night after their capture she lost her voice and hasn't spoken a word since. The Indian women called her Whoo Whoo, because she made a funny little sound like an owl."

"And to think," said Mrs. Hartley as she again drew her child to her, "that the first words she uttered were, 'Mother—Mother!' I'm so happy I could cry."

Whoo Whoo turned her head on her mother's shoulder till she met the eyes of Micky. There flashed in that look a wealth of understanding, and a gleam of warning that made Micky say:

"It's all like a fairy story to me. I'll sure believe in miracles from this time on."

Easy Street Experts

"It's a case for violence—straight violence," comments the Honorable John in this exciting story "The Hide of the Wolf." The gifted Mr. Atkey is in fine form here.

By Bertram Atkey

GLANCING back at the habits and customs of those notable adventurers the Honorable John Brass and his partner Colonel Clumber, as veraciously set forth from time to time in these pages, one is compelled to admit that the partners were prone to dwell too weightily upon the pleasures of Food in Large Quantities; and lest this should convey a false impression of these remarkable men, it may be said, as a species of counterblast, that they never neglected to take as much exercise as they could make it convenient to take. It was with this object that they invariably arranged to rent yearly an extremely good and by no means inexpensive bit of rough shooting.

It was while they were enjoying a quiet month's shooting over a couple of thousand acres they had rented one season upon Salisbury Plain, that they felt themselves impelled to intrude, versus Mr. Homer Steelhall of New York. With the shooting they had taken the house of the owner, who, a man of restless but sporting temperament, had sallied forth to Monte Carlo with the avowed intention of either breaking the bank outright, or bending it to an extent which would render him wealthy beyond the dreams of the delirious for the rest of his natural life. With them to Stone Hollow Manor—so the little estate was named—the partners took Sing, the cook-valet-chauffeur and human miracle, sole property of the Honorable John, and Mr. Ferdinand Bloom, valet-butler to the Colonel and general man-of-burden at Purdston (the quiet little country corner of the partners), together with Mrs. Bloom.

The general staff of Stone Hollow Manor were given a holiday until either the end of the shooting season, or until their master had bent the bank at Monte Carlo sufficiently to pay them some of their arrears of wages.

Hence it chanced that the Brass-Clumber combine was, so to speak, in the theater of war in strong force, when the Bandmann-Steelhall matter first obtruded itself within the range of their vision.

IT was the gentle Sing who first brought to their ken the fact that there might be the possibility of a little shearing of wool to be accomplished during their holiday, and he made them acquainted with the fact one evening after dinner.

John had just passed him a small compliment upon a dish of partridges which, of the various courses the industrious Chink had prepared for dinner, had pleased the partners most, and it was in an atmosphere of general self-respect, satisfaction and well-being, the whole illumined by some of the remarkable old brandy which the pair had brought to Stone Hollow with them, that Sing said:

"Please, master, they keepee plisoner in that house Gallops!"

The Honorable John removed his cigar.

"Keep a prisoner at Gallops, do they, my son? Who told you that?"

"Me watchee, me see, master," said the Chinaman quietly.

"When?"

"Allee same night-time. Me likee walkee at night-time all about downs and watchee Gallops."

"Oh, that's it, is it? Been gaddin' and prowlin' about at night, keeping your eyes open, hey? Just tell us what you know about this prisoner at Gallops."

Sing's narrative was brief but interesting.

It was during one of his moonlight prowls across the wastes of Salisbury Plain that he had approached the small mansion known as Gallops, presumably because it had once been the home of a gentleman who was passionately attached to the turf and had in his heyday bred and trained many a beautiful thoroughbred failure in the stables attached to the house. Unfortunately the sportsman had passed from his heyday to his pay-day, and when he had finished paying, the occupancy of his big house had become quite out of the question. Consequently he let Gallops furnished and lived on the proceeds. Many tenants had occupied the place, but it is only with one of these that this story has to do—namely, Mr. Max Bandmann, who was, at the time Sing made his discovery, entertaining a house-party there.

The partners had seen Max Bandmann. He was a dark-complexioned, stoutish person, not without jewelry, who looked rather like a money-lender on the point of retiring. The partners had not been very interested in him or any of his friends —he looked, they thought, like a person who knew how to take care of what he had, and was profuse but careless about food. A man, in short, the partners had no earthly use for at all.

It was, then, while prowling on his nocturnal rambles round the house of this charming individual that Sing had observed, and been observed by, the owner of a white face at a window on the second floor. This one had opened the window—barred inside—and called out softly the following words:

"For God's sake, help! I'm a prisoner here—catch—Homer—" and abrutly vanished, evidently pulled back by some one in the room—some one who had craned and peered out from the same window for at least five minutes after, endeavoring to see who it was the prisoner was addressing.

But Sing was standing as still as a graven image in the shadows and did not move until the second face disappeared. Then he had glided across to the white fragment of paper which the prisoner had dropped, culled it, and retired.

"I see," said the Honorable John, reaching for the paper, "and does he tell us how to catch Homer?"

He studied the scrawl upon the scrap of paper, and his attitude suddenly changed.

"Sure! Why not? Very sound scheme!" he muttered. "Certainly! But five hundred be damned! Too cheap!"

He passed the paper to Colonel Clumber with a gleam in his eye.

"What d'ye make out of that?" he asked. "It looks as though there's something doing even in these mangel-wurzel sections."

THE Colonel read, first in silence, then aloud as follows:

"Five hundred pounds reward will be paid to the person who first informs the police that in this house—occupied by Max Bandmann—Mr. Homer Steelhall, financier, of New York, Paris and London, is being held prisoner by the said Max Ban—"

The document finished there—evidently, if it was genuine, Mr. Steelhall had been interrupted and had to conceal his message.

The Colonel looked at his partner, and his eyes were suddenly lighted with a significant gleam.

"D'ye know who Homer Steelhall is?" he demanded.

"I seem to have heard of the lad—who is he, anyway?" inquired Mr. Brass.

"He's about the fourth richest money-monument in America," snapped the Colonel. "He's 'Multi' Steelhall—the Wall Street Wolf."

"*Is* he so!" exclaimed John. "Then he'll have to be rescued. But—five hundred!"

IT was at precisely nine o'clock on the following evening that the motor of Mr. Brass and Colonel Clumber broke down, by an odd chance, just outside Gallops. The reverberent backfirings produced by the ingenious and persevering Sing at length attracted the attention of Mr. Bandmann and his guests—and one or two of them strolled out to watch. Of these Bandmann was one, and a fair, military-looking sportsman with blurred blue eyes and a whisky-and-soda complexion was another. The third of the party was a tall, slender, good-looking woman.

The fourth of the little group was a pale youth with long hair, dull eyes, and extraordinarily beautiful and delicate hands. He might have been a poet, a painter, a forger, a safe lock expert, a musician or a card-sharp.

A brief exchange of comments on motors and their habits revealed to Mr. Bandmann and Company that these two stranded strangers seemed to have much in common with the Gallops house-party, and an invitation to enter the house and take what the military-looking man tersely described as a "mild snort" was extended by Bandmann.

"Can't see neighbors perish of thirst on our own doorstep,' eh, Bandy?" playfully said Captain Fitzjustin—for so the military man called himself.

All agreed, and a move was presently made to the house, where the frankly and openly—almost too openly, indeed—delighted partners made the acquaintance of two more ladies.

"Had no idea you had such a delightful party here, Bandmann," said the Honorable John. "Great pleasure to meet a bit of civilization out here. Very handsome woman, that Mrs. Anstruther—all delightful, but she's specially so, hey?" He referred to the slender woman who had come out at first.

"She is," said Bandmann, not without a certain enthusiasm. "Have another whisky?"

"Sure," replied Mr. Brass, who appeared to be getting a little garrulous—like his partner, who in a far corner was talking quite vivaciously (for him) with an orange-haired queen by the piano.

Mr. Vyse-Jones, who was "Eddie" to his friends, it seemed, the person with the flexible fingers, suggested a game of cards—poker. Captain Fitzjustin recommended billiards. The guests of the evening whiskily declaring themselves agreeable to aught which might befall, Bandmann—or "dear old Max," as the orange-tipped siren put it—voted for cards.

Cards therefore it was, with the ladies looking on. It was all very pleasant and jolly. Mr. Wilton Flood and Mr. Henry Black (for the partners were using their favorite pseudonyms) had shocking bad luck, poor dear boys, and were losing rather heavily. But there was plenty of whisky to cheer them up and lots of light conversation; and when presently Sing reported—via a manservant with a yellowish face, like that of a habitual convict—that the car was hopeless that night, a unanimous cry was raised to the effect that the partners must stay the night.

"Certainly, dear chaps, you must stay—motor you over first thing in the morning, eh, Bandy?" insisted Fitzjustin.

"Sure, boys—can't take any refusal," said Bandmann. So the partners allowed themselves to be persuaded, and the fun waxed fast, furious and—expensive.

It was in the small hours when Messrs. Brass and Clumber, pleading extreme fatigue, broke off the game. They had lost something like four hundred pounds between them, and were both comfortably "lit up."

The whole party saw them to their rooms, where the capable Chinaman, waiting to "valet" them safely into bed, bade them good night and left them to their slumbers.

"Two pretty decent old soaks," said Mr. Vyse-Jones casually. "But dead easy. It's a shame to take the money. And aint that a red-hot thirst of theirs!"

Everybody agreed, took their share of the plunder, and with the exception of Bandmann, presently dispersed to their rooms—as plain and palpable a set of swindlers and adventurers as ever lived.

Bandmann disappeared in the direction of the attics. He was there a quarter of an hour, then made his way softly downstairs to a large and comfortable bedroom on the first floor, and a click of the lock announced that he too had retired for the night.

BUT it is highly probable that had he been able to take a glance into the room of the Honorable John, he would not have entered so tranquilly into slumberland—for he would have had somewhat wherewith to occupy his mental horsepower.

The two "decent old soaks," in soft-soled shoes taken from their capacious overcoat pockets, were sitting quietly in the Honorable John's room, apparently lost in revery. Sing was seated in a chair by the table, doing nothing, in absolute silence.

The trio appeared to be waiting for something, and the partners were most uncompromisingly sober.

Occasionally they exchanged a brief, low-voiced comment.

"Yes—as crude a crowd of crooks as I ever saw," said Mr. Brass. He seemed rather pleased with his description, for he repeated it: "A crude crowd of crooks."

"Sure," agreed the Colonel. "But I could forgive that little orange-tipped dame a lot. She's a bright little ray of sunshine."

John did not quite agree.

"Oh, I don't know, old man. She was short on the brains, I thought, and wasn't she a trifle too plentiful? If she was another six inches taller, she'd be more in proportion. Now, Mrs. Anstruther—Elline—is in another class. She's got that little round blonde defeated from the last look in the glass onwards. Not my usual style, I'll admit, but interesting—clean cut, stylish, got nerve and breeding—well-bred woman, I should say Elline was. Should like to see more of her."

And surprisingly enough, his wish was instantly gratified. Some one tapped softly at the door.

SING slid over and looked mutely at his master, who hesitated, frowned, then nodded. Sing opened the door, and the graceful Elline, engagingly clad in a kimono, entered.

She looked sharply at both partners, nodded unconsciously, smiled slightly, and said:

"Ah! I *thought* so!"

She sat down. "Pure instinct!" she said, not without pride. "If those conceited, self-satisfied idiots were *really* first-rate crooks, they'd have guessed you too."

She smiled, well-pleased with herself, and took a cigarette from a little gold case.

"Tell me, friends, what are you after?"

For a moment the partners were too surprised to speak. Then, realizing that whoever they may have misled into believing them not wholly *compos mentis* that evening, Elline Anstruther was not one of them, they did the only possible thing and met her on her own grounds.

The Honorable John smiled friendlily.

"Not two minutes ago I said you were the brightest of the whole bouquet, my dear," he said. "And if this doesn't prove it, what does?"

He leaned forward.

"I think we'd better have a little chat, Mrs. Anstruther—or may I say Elline?"

"That," said the raven-haired Elline, "is what I've come for."

The Colonel stirred impatiently.

"Well, if that's the case, and as it's about half-past three, supposin' we get on with the conversation instead of beating about the bush."

IT was not a long conversation which followed, but it was very much to the point. The delightful Elline spoke first, and by the time she had finished, extremely little remained to be said.

The great Homer Steelhall was being held by the Bandmann gang—or rather, the portion of it at Gallops—until such time as information was received by Bandmann, from the part of the gang working in America, to the effect that "things," meaning the stock-market and other markets, were in such trim that the sudden suicide of the Great Shark would have a startling result upon them—a result that could be reckoned in millions. In other words, when the manipulators in New York and elsewhere were ready to take the fullest advantage of the inevitable result of Steelhall's death, word would be sent to Bandmann, and Steelhall would commit suicide—have it committed for him.

"You mean Bandmann and Company will kill him?"

Mrs. Anstruther nodded. "I do."

"But that's called murder, not suicide," said the Honorable John, his face hardening.

The fair Elline smiled slightly.

"I know—that's why I'm going to prevent it—and why you're going to help me," she said coolly. "And by the way, who are you, and why are you coming into this affair?"

Mr. Brass waved an airy hand.

"Oh, we knew you had him here boxed up, and we're just browsing round—

prospecting. It ought to be worth a trifle to set Homer Steelhall free! He's some Homer when he's loose." John pondered, frowning, then went on: "But look here, Elline my girl, what are you doing in a gang like this? Killers—that's what they are—and cold-blooded killers, at that."

The woman laughed rather bitterly.

"I'm not one of the Bandmann gang, except for the fact that I'm the jail-widow of one of the worst husbands that ever happened," she said. "When he was sentenced, Bandmann decided that I knew too much about the Steelhall plot to go free. So I'm here—because Bandmann and Company can't trust me—though they pretend that it's because they want to treat the wife of my husband squarely.

"I don't know why it was, but somehow I suspected from the start that you two weren't quite so simple as you looked—and you don't look very simple. I wondered for a while whether you were detectives—but they don't often hand over four hundred pounds' worth of notes even to get the confidence of people they suspect," continued the lady. "Anyway, you're not, and I'm very glad of it. Now, about rescuing this Wall Street wolf: are we partners?"

"Sure," said the Honorable John. "Sharing in threes."

The Colonel readily agreed.

"Very well," said the jail-widow. "Let me give you one word of warning. You—we're going to try to upset the plans of a gang which has worked on this scheme for three years."

"Three devils!" said Mr. Brass, amazed.

"No—years," corrected the graceful Elline. "And they've spent—oh, nobody knows how much—perhaps a hundred thousand dollars."

SHE leaned forward, her cheeks flushing, her eyes glowing.

"I've heard Bandmann say this: During the week following the announcement of Steelhall's suicide, anything from forty to a hundred million invested dollars will turn over in their sleep. And if we've got our nets spread right, a mighty lot of those dollars will turn over into our nets—we'll only have to pull the string.

"So, for God's sake, don't underrate the crowd. They're out after the big stake—and they'll kill anybody who seems to be standing in their way, without a flicker of the eyelid. You've got to believe that—for it's true. No doubt you're thinking that this is just a casual hold-up of a rich man for ransom. It looks casual, I confess. But it's been more carefully thought out than a big battle—" She stopped abruptly, listening.

"Sit still," she hissed sharply, then glided across and switched off the light. Instantly the room was dark and still as a grave.

For a moment nothing happened. Then very slowly and softly the handle of the door turned. With a faint creak, the door opened. All knew that somebody, prowling stealthily in the utter darkness, was standing on the threshold listening. And here the Honorable John did a brilliant thing. He was sitting next to the bed, and he began to breath heavily, almost stertorously. A few seconds dragged by. It seemed, to all there, literally impossible that that person could stand there and yet be unaware that within a few feet of him sat four people, keyed up to the rigidity and tension of overwound banjo-strings.

He had only to switch on the light for a fraction of time. But he did not. Over by the bed the Honorable John breathed deeply, noisily, steadily. Once he risked a queer little gurgling snore.

Then, just as the tension grew unbearable, a faint draught fanned through the room and the door clicked.

Whoever had stood there was gone—and probably his excess of caution had saved them. Rather than run the least shadow of risk of the guest suspecting anything odd, the prowler had not switched on the light. He had heard the Honorable John breathing, and that had satisfied him.

They sat in silence for another ten minutes. Then Elline switched on one light—that of a reading-lamp—only. In the dim and shaded light her face was deadly pale.

"That was Bandmann—creeping about—like a snake—a viper!" she whispered. She rose.

"I'll come and see you tomorrow or next day if I can slip away. I might manage. Don't hurry things. Nothing will happen for a fortnight, at least. They're not ready over there, yet. Don't go to the police—they're clumsy—and these men will fight like tigers if they can't get away. Every one of them has been in prison—and will die rather than go again."

She moved quietly to the door, opened it without sound, listened a moment and was gone.

Neither of the partners spoke for a moment. They were looking thoughtful—very thoughtful indeed.

It was the Honorable John who spoke first.

"Well?" he said, and added characteristically: "What are we going to do about it?"

"We're up against a pack of real wolves," said the Colonel slowly. "And they're up against a bigger wolf than the lot of us put together. It's wolf eat wolf—and do we need the money badly enough to butt in and gouge it out of the game?"

"Old man," said John solemnly, "we always need money—every may always does. It may be a case of wolf eat wolf. I don't doubt it is. And the Bandmann wolves can eat as much of the Steelhall wolf as they can get—bar his hide. That's reserved—for you and me and Elline! How's that?"

He looked expectantly at his partner, and the Colonel did not fail him.

"That goes," said he. And it went.

IN the light of the morning sun (and of overnight events) Messrs. Brass and Clumber saw things even more clearly on the following morning than they imagined.

They saw, for instance, with translucent clarity of vision, the shiftiness—almost controlled but not quite—in the eyes of Bandmann; they observed that he had the bulging jaw-hinges and the short, thick, spatulate thumbs of the brute. They perceived in the square face of the man Fitzjustin the unconquerable and fatal obstinacy of the well-bred man who has gone wholly and irretrievably to the dogs, and lives only to acquire the means of satisfying his elaborate desires.

The dull eyes of Vyse-Jones told them nothing. But they perceived that their dullness was akin to the blank and lidless stare of the serpent. The orange blonde and the other "lady" were the sort of wives these men marry.

Elline Anstruther, thinnish, clear-cut, steady-eyed, although probably the eldest of the women, and about to be *passée,* stood out alone from that sinister company.

It was significant of a well-hidden discipline that the whole crew put in an appearance at breakfast. They were the type of people who, after a "night," usually breakfast all over the morning in dressing-gowns. It was a good breakfast, and the partners did surprisingly well for men who had been so thirsty overnight.

But on the whole they were glad to get away. They took their shooting very seriously, they said, and were anxious to get to work. Nobody made any violent effort to persuade them to stay, and at about ten o'clock, after a not too obviously insincere invitation to come and have their "revenge" on an early evening, they rolled away in their repaired car.

Bandmann watched them out of sight, thoughtfully puffing at a cigar.

"Anything wrong, old man?" asked Elline carelessly.

"Eh? No. I was just wondering why that man Flood allowed his Chink to sleep on the couch in his room," said Bandmann.

"Why, didn't he say at breakfast that he gets those sharp recurrences of malaria and likes to have the Chinaman with him?"

Bandmann nodded.

"Yes. I was just wondering—got to keep your eyes open, you know, Elline."

The momentary doubt left his face as he stared at her.

"About that other matter," he said. "Your Clyde's in for life. I had it in this morning's mail. You'll divorce him and make a good wife to me yet." His eyes gleamed. "Eh, kid?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"I can't get romantic while this business is on, Max," she said. "Let it lie till you've made your—kill."

"And then what?"

He moved nearer, perfectly self-controlled but avid.

"Then—why, then we'll talk it over—if you still want to," she said, and laughing, she went indoors.

Bandmann smiled slowly, shot a heavy-lidded glance up to a window, invisibly barred, behind which sat the mute millionaire with a guard who never slept until relieved, and nodded to himself.

"All the money I shall need—all the health I can use—and the woman I want to crown the pile! Good enough? Well—it's worth three years' work, aint it?" he mused as he too went inside. He had plenty to do.

OTHERS also had plenty to do—the Honorable John Combine, for instance. In spite of their urgency at Gallops, the partners did not shoot that morning. They were too absorbed in discussing ways and means concerning the rescue of Steelhall.

"We're up against a bad, ugly crowd, old man," said John with profound gravity. "A bad, ugly crowd—who've got their bolt-holes all ready, clear from here to New York."

"Sure," nodded the Colonel.

"I kind of gathered from Elline that this highbinder Bandmann was inclined to be rather stuck on her—but if she banks on that to any extent, she's banking on a delusion. Bandmann may like her—don't doubt he does—like her myself, in fact—charmin' woman; but Bandmann likes Bandmann better. What news about Steelhall she gets, she'll get in spite of Bandmann—yes."

John pondered.

"Let's look: there's a guard always with Steelhall—we can take it he's armed, always awake and can be trusted by Bandmann," he went on. "But we've got to get Steelhall. We've got to convey to him that rescuing the Wall Street Wolf works out at a higher figure than any five hundred pounds. Multi-millionaires come high. As a matter of fact, we might be doing the world a very good turn if we allowed Bandmann's bunch to blot him off, as they've arranged."

Colonel Clumber nodded.

"The cheap press says he's a shark, a wolf, a man-eater and a blood-sucking vampire," said the Colonel, "and if that's true, I for one could cheerfully let him die. But probably it isn't, and anyway, we can't afford it."

"No," agreed his partner; "we need the money. We aint getting any younger, squire, and we've an old age coming to us which has got to be provided—"

HE broke off as Sing slid in, followed most unexpectedly by Elline Anstruther. That she was in a hurry was evident from the fact that she began speaking even as she began to cross the room.

"I have exactly one minute," she said, and then swiftly added:

"Ignore the note your servant picked up. Steelhall knows the danger he's in—to a fraction. He only put five hundred on the note for fear ten thousand should seem exaggerated and the whole thing be dismissed as an absurd practical joke. He'll pay ten thousand to get out."

The partners stiffened.

"He can consider himself out," said John rather hoarsely. "How do you know?"

She slid back the sleeve of her loose tweed coat. Round her lower arm was a bluish-black bruise.

"That's where the guard gripped me when he saw I was near enough to whisper to Steelhall. I'd taken a written message to the guard from Bandmann, who had to go to town. I stole a few words with Steelhall while the guard was worrying it out. That's all. It's up to you to get him out. Good by."

She turned and was gone.

The partners faced each other.

"There's no opening here for any fancy work," said John deliberately, "no opening—no time. It's a case for violence—straightforward violence. Hey?"

Without waiting for an answer, he went to the door and bawled for Sing, who appeared like a lemon-tinted wraith.

"Listen here, my lad," said the Honorable John, "I want eight Chinks—eight of your highbinder pals—and each of 'em has got to be a sandbag-sharp. Slugging experts! Understand?"

"Yes, master."

"Can you get?"

"Can do, master."

"How much a head?"

"Ten shilling, master."

"Tell 'em ten pounds apiece and all expenses. Sandbaggers, mind—no hatchet men, no knife conjurors, no stranglers. Just good plain sandbaggers—and if you can't get eight, get as many as you can."

He dropped a fistful of notes into the Chink's hand.

"Go to London by this evening's train, collect 'em and report here after dark tomorrow night. Understand, my son?"

"Yes, master."

"Right. Pull your freight. Bloom'll drive you to Salisbury Station, but you'll walk your men out across the Plain after dark tomorrow. Do this little job well, my son, and I'll remember to look after you. Now, slip it."

Sing "slipped it."

"Yes," said the Honorable John absently, "it's a case for violence—and violence is cheap enough, hey?"

"Sure, sure," replied that man of few words, his partner.

"Eight first-class devils from Chinatown, Sing, you and me—what's the odds on violence for the Steelhall Stakes?" said the Honorable John playfully.

"I hate violence myself," he added regretfully, "but we've got to face facts."

THE following day was normal. The partners saw nothing of Elline Anstruther, nor of the Bandmann crew. They had just finished their second liqueur brandy after dinner when Sing returned.

"All velly good, master," said the yellow conjuror. "My men allee waiting in galage."

"In the garage, hey, son? All right. We'll take a look at them."

Together they went off to the garage, where they inspected their forces—eight of the scaliest toughs that ever left Canton for sake of their hides.

"Humph!" said the Honorable John. "Handsome-looking lot! Friends of yours, hey, Sing? Well, tell 'em this in their own tongue—and then I'll tell 'em again in mine. We want no mistakes."

He delivered his instructions—the Colonel and he had worked out a very complete plan of campaign that afternoon.

They were a silent, sinister-looking lot, but they understood precisely what was required of them, and what was not, by the time the Honorable John and the Colonel had finished with them.

"Give them one medium drink apiece, Sing," said Mr. Brass, referring to his watch. "And while we get ready, they can have ten minutes for food. Feed 'em."

And the partners retired to gird themselves for the fray.

A QUARTER of an hour later a little file of shadows moved away from Stone Hollow Manor, across the turf to where, some three miles away, the lights of Gallops glowed yellowy through the darkness. They went with the silence of red Indians, save for the two leading shadows, who muttered occasionally to each other concerning the discomfort of night operations.

But as the company approached Gallops, there were no more mutterings. Treading as lightly as wolves, the crowd approached the house. Two, with one of the leaders, Sing, went round to a back door; two, with the Colonel, went to a side door; and four, with the Honorable John, went to the front door. There was a big porch, in pitchy blackness here, and in the shadows, two on each side of the door, Mr. Brass posted his two brace of sluggers.

Then he knocked.

"Ready, you highbinding blackguards," he growled.

The door swung open, the glare of the light from the hall revealing the Honorable John apparently alone on the doorstep.

He leaned to the manservant and in an admirably agitated voice inquired if Mr. Bandmann was at home.

"If so, tell him I must have a word with him—on desperately urgent business. No, no, I wont come in—no time! Quick, now!"

The man started and without hesitation darted out of the hall.

Almost immediately Bandmann appeared, rather white, his face hard and set, and one hand most suggestively clutching something in the pocket of his dinner jacket.

The Honorable John was beckoning him from the porch.

"Hurry up, old man," he said softly but most urgently. "I've heard that—that—"

"Hello," said Bandmann, recognizing him. "You've heard what?"

The Honorable John stepped back off of the porch, starting away from the house toward the road.

"Listen for yourself."

Bandmann stepped onto the porch. There was a soft, muffled thud, and Bandmann toppled over without a sound. Clutching yellow hands caught him as he fell, and in an instant he was out of the zone of light from the hall.

The manservant came into the hall just as the Honorable John reappeared. John's hat was on the back of his head, and he seemed fearfully excited.

"Hey, you," he roared, "send Fitzjustin and Vyse-Jones out to Bandmann—there's a motor waiting in the road!"

THEY must have been listening for it—as all criminals at all times listen for dangerous or ominous sounds—for the two men appeared swiftly.

"What's wrong?" gasped Fitzjustin, running across the hall, a pistol openly in his hand.

"Bandmann, by God! Down the drive!" stammered the Honorable John.

"Eh? Where—what's wrong?" snarled the Captain, running through the porch, Vyse-Jones at his heels. A black object whizzed, like a bar of iron, past Fitzjustin's head, just missing him, but that mattered nothing, for almost in the same instant the Honorable John's fist crashed to his jaw and he went down with a sob. The sluggers did better with Vyse-Jones, who was felled at the second pace he took onto the

fatal porch. The manservant slipped out of the hall like a gliding eel, and the Honorable John, with two of his Chinks, went in. But before he could cross the hall—and he was not slow—he halted abruptly.

The orange-haired lady was standing in the doorway through which the jailbird had slipped, and she too had an automatic. She screamed an epithet and flung up her hand. But even as she did so, something like a black boomerang shot past John, and seeming almost to encircle her head, sent her reeling down. One of the "experts" had flung his sandbag. . . . . A queer, flashing little thought that he owed his life to Sing's unerring eye for the best—whether sauces or sandbaggers—went writhing swiftly through John's brain.

A man came plunging toward the hall from the back regions of the place. He fired as he came, missed, and was beaten senseless by the hardest blow the Honorable John was capable of. He was a big, burly brute—evidently one of the guards.

A woman began to scream in the room from which Bandmann and his friends had come, and Elline Anstruther looked out, very white.

"You—oh!" she said, and went back. The screaming stopped. Evidently Elline had the whip hand over the hysterical Mrs. Fitzjustin.

Then the Colonel appeared, followed by Sing.

"Got both the menservants and one of the guards," he said. "No more outside."

"They're all out here," said John. "Now for upstairs." He grabbed one of the sandbag men and steered him into the room where the two women were.

"Watch her," he said, pointing to Mrs. Fitzjustin. "No hurtee, you savvy? You keep plisoner—no lettee loose. Can do?"

"Can do!" said the highbinder. John turned to Elline. "How many upstairs?" he asked.

"Just the guard and Steelhall. This way."

They followed her—John, the Colonel, Sing and two Chinese, leaving the others to guard the gang.

AT the top of the stairs leading to the attics the last guard was awaiting them, a big, black forty-five caliber pistol in his hand.

This one was the coolest of the gang—he had had more time to collect himself.

He stared down at them, menacing them with the ugly weapon.

"You don't get me alive," he said in a casual, almost friendly tone to the Honorable John, who was leading. "The sleuth don't live that railroads *me* again."

John recognized the type.

"Oh, *you!* Who're *you?* It's Steelhall we want, not you!"

The man grinned queerly. "Steelhall? Oh, take him!"

He stepped back quickly and vanished through a door which he banged behind him.

"Not that way," said Elline Anstruther to John, who would have followed the guard. "The door on the left."

Together, the Honorable John, the Colonel and the woman entered. After the odd invitation of the guard, the partners were half expecting to find that Steelhall had been tricked out of their reach.

But they need not have feared.

Homer Steelhall was there. The attic was comfortably furnished as a bed-sitting-room, and the multi-millionaire was sitting on the bed.

He stood up as the Honorable John and his retinue entered.

"Is this a rescue?" he said in quiet and completely passionless tones.

"It is that, Mr. Steelhall—in accordance with your offer. And between ourselves it wasn't any amateur's job," said the Honorable John cordially. "It's cost you ten thousand, I'm afraid, but I take it that you're about the last man to call that a fancy price, hey?"

He laughed very cheerfully indeed. But he was watching the multi-millionaire very closely, for Mr. Steelhall was a gray and quiet man, completely without enthusiasm. He wore a chilling air of reserve and a hard face—a very hard face.

But John need not have worried.

The Wall Street Wolf reflected silently for a moment. Then he spoke.

"I am a man of few words," he said in a level emotionless voice. "You tell me you have rescued me and claim the reward I mentioned to that lady—" He indicated the fair Elline. "Very well. When I find myself in a first-class carriage on the London express, a perfectly free agent, I will give you an order on my London bankers for ten thousand pounds."

He stopped for a moment, then added:

"What has become of the toughs who brought me here?"

"Prisoners downstairs," said the Honorable John. "They're for sale—cheap."

A faint smile flickered over the face of the multi-millionaire.

"You are a business man, I see. But I am no buyer," he said. "I shall sail for New York by the first boat. I can't be bothered. Every day I waste in this country waiting to see them convicted will cost me more than I care to lose. Oblige me by holding them until I am in London. Then dispose of them as you wish."

"Sure," said the Honorable John, who like all the others present had no desire to be mixed up in a big and sensational trial. "That goes with us, hey, Squire?"

COLONEL CLUMBER agreed, and the Honorable John became busy.

"We can run you over to Salisbury in time to catch the last train up," he said. "Are you ready?"

"I am waiting," said Steelhall.

John gave a few swift instructions to Sing, and a minute later he and the Colonel with the millionaire and Elline Anstruther were walking quickly back to Stone Hollow Manor.

In the coach road they had found the guard who had eluded them upstairs. He had jumped from an attic adjoining that of Steelhall, and broken his leg. John shouted to Sing, and the Chink took the man into the little fold of prisoners.

Three-quarters of an hour later the quartet stood at the door of a first-class carriage on Salisbury platform.

"Here is a sheet of paper—or will you write it on a check?" said Mr. Brass hintfully as Steelhall settled down in a corner. The Wall Street Wolf smiled.

"Thank you—a sheet of paper will do."

He wrote a few seconds and passed the sheet to John.

"I will confirm that at my bankers before I sail," he said. "Are you through?"

They stared.

"We are," said the Honorable John stiffly.

"Then good night. I needn't detain you." And so saying, Homer settled down in a corner and took out a cigar-case.

"Oh, sure—as you wish. Good night," replied the Honorable John, and with his partner and Elline, he turned away to seek another carriage, for they too were going up. They had an appointment, practically speaking, at Steelhall's bank as soon as it opened next morning.

"A very cold-blooded man, Homer is," said the Honorable John as they settled down for their journey. "As chilly as a fish—d'ye notice that he didn't even *thank* us?"

The Colonel grinned.

"But he paid us."

"Oh, sure," admitted John grudgingly.

THEY cashed the order without difficulty next morning, and spent the remainder of the forenoon at their flat—Elline having retired to a quiet hotel with her share—awaiting, not without anxiety, the arrival of Sing.

But all was well. At half-past two their big Rolls-Royce, with the Chink at the wheel, rolled up, heavily laden with guns, gear and all the innumerable accessories to comfort without which they rarely traveled. For they did not propose to return to Stone Hollow Manor that season.

"All right, Sing, my son?"

"Allee light, master. Blooms allee same coming by train, house locked, me givee keys to agent. All finished."

"What about Bandmann's gang?"

"They allee packing up, velly much hully, allee night long. All gone flom that place five o'clock this morning, master."

"And how about *your* bunch of stiffs, my lad?"

Sing grinned.

"Me payee them and send them home by train, too, master. All finished please." He fumbled in his pocket and produced a solitary ten-shilling note.

"Ten shilling, please, master—you givee me too much for payee Chinamen."

John took it, looked at it, pondered and finally decided. He handed it back.

"You've been a good lad, Sing—a very good lad. Take the half-quid, my son, for yourself. You don't want to get a swelled head, but at the same time you can depend upon it that if you're a good lad, I'll look after *you* all right. Now get the things indoors, put the car away, and see what you can do in the way of a decent dinner. Slip into it, Sing, that's a good lad."

And the good lad "slipped" forthwith.

"The Firm That Flitted," another exciting adventure of "The Easy Street Experts," will be a feature of our next issue.

The Lobster List

A vividly dramatic story of the streets and the town, by the gifted author of "The Prodigal," "Thinner Than Water" and many other well-liked BLUE BOOK stories.

By George L. Knapp

IN police circles, as elsewhere, activity often is taken for efficiency. The man who butts into the limelight on all occasions, gets his name in the papers, makes plenty of arrests—if they are not too raw—is marked for promotion and commendation. The chap who feels more like a big brother to his beat than a censor of it, and never makes a pinch unless he has to, is likely to be shoved into the background. In the phrase of a certain city not a thousand miles from Lake Michigan, such a person goes on the lobster list.

Officer Joseph Schwartz was not a candidate for the lobster list. He announced his lack of such ambition before putting on uniform. He was going on the force, he told his companions, for what there was in it. The salary was as much as he could get in any other walk of life, and the pickings were pretty good. Both pay and pickings were better in the detective force than in the uniform rank, and so Schwartz proposed to get into plain clothes at the earliest possible moment.

A street-boy himself, Schwartz had studied the police department at close range, and knew a lot about it that the wisest highbrow never dreams. He knew its best and its worst. He knew men—like old John Marks, for example—whose hands were as clean as a priest's, who were models of courage, and beloved by every honest person and half the crooks on their beats. Schwartz did not aspire to be one of these. They did not get promoted; they lived in rented homes and worried about the price of shoes for the kids. Schwartz looked elsewhere for inspiration—to a sergeant who had three three-flat buildings; to a plain-clothes officer who had eleven thousand dollars on his person when killed one night in a street-car accident, to a retired captain of detectives spending his declining years in a princely mansion in California.

Schwartz was not long in attaining the first round on the ladder of his ambition. He arrested folks so vigorously and kept himself so much in evidence that in

a very short time he was put in plain clothes and sent forth to unravel mysteries, some of which were highly profitable when disentangled the right way.

ABOUT the time that this happened, Jerry Kaminek, whose baptismal name was Jaroslav, reached the age of sixteen, and at the end of the educational year following, quit school to go to work. Jerry was Bohemian by birth, though he came to this country so young that he had little memory of any other. He was an orphan, living with an older married sister; and by any standards one likes to name, Jerry was a pretty good boy. He stood well in his class at school, never had perpetrated more than the normal amount of mischief, was something of an athlete, and had all the Bohemian capacity for athletic discipline. He belonged to a baseball club in summer, and all the year round appeared at least once a week at the gymnasium of a near-by settlement house. He carried a wicked punch in either hand; indeed, two men who promoted boxing contests told him that there was a profitable place for him in the ring if he chose to work for it.

As a new hand at the factory where he found work, he came in for a good deal of horseplay, and after a few days grew tired of it. Warning produced no effect; so one afternoon when work was over, he waited outside the yard for his chief tormentor, a lad considerably older than himself, and gave the chap a thorough thrashing. Just as he put the finishing touch on the job with a right cross, there was a cry of "Beat it!" The audience evaporated—and Jerry found himself in the grip of detective officer Schwartz.

"You can't come that kind of stuff around me, young feller," announced the detective, slipping back to the vernacular of his former beat. "You're pinched! You too!" he added, as the boy on the ground sat up and tried to take a look at the situation. "Come on, now!"

Jerry tried to protest, but in vain. The foreman, who probably had been watching the scrap from a vantage-point, came out and added his objections, but with no result. Finding his efforts useless, he accompanied the boys to the station and went surety for them both. They appeared in juvenile court next morning, of course losing their time at the factory while doing so. Whatever animosity they may have felt toward each other had been spent in the fight; they told a straight story, and the judge let them go after a lecture whose friendly tone was emphasized by a twinkling eye. He was—and is—a very human fellow, that judge; but I would not say the same of the head and chief owner of the factory.

"Fisher," said that mogul next day, "I understand that two of our employees were arrested Tuesday for fighting."

"Two kids," returned the foreman. "The judge let 'em off, an' they're good friends now."

"They'll have to take their friendship somewhere else if it happens again," said the head of the concern. "I aint going to have any fighting round here."

THAT same day the same theme came up outside the works. Marks, policeman on the factory beat, did not like this poaching on his preserves, and said so.

"What did you want to pull them kids for?" he demanded. "They're good boys, both of 'em, an' they weren't hurtin' nothin'. I'd of looked the other way or give 'em a cussin' an' sent 'em home."

"Yep, an' you're travelin' beat after twenty-four years," retorted Schwartz. "None o' that in mine. They aint goin' to get no chance to put me on the lobster list. There'll be somethin' doin' while I'm around!"

For some months after this Jerry had no trouble. He was a good worker, and soon got a small promotion, though heading toward a blind-alley phase of the work. No one teased him more than in reason, nowadays; he was paying his board, attending gym, having a good time, giving his brain a rest, and paying as little thought to the future as if he had been a native Anglo-Saxon. And then, born of his very love for clean sport, came difficulties.

ONE of Jerry's friends, Fred Lewis by name, had become interested in cross-country tramping, and persuaded Jerry to go on a hike with him. It was winter—which is one of the best times for such an expedition. The boys lived some distance apart, and so they planned to meet Saturday afternoon at a point about equidistant between their homes. Thence they would take an electric car to a suburb on the farther edge of the forest preserve, stay that night at a cheap hotel, and next day tramp back to town through the snow-

carpeted woods. They met according to schedule, and while waiting for the electric, which here ran over the tracks of a surface car-line, saw a mutual acquaintance, Ivan—or "Van" Brusileff.

VAN was coming down the street with a hard-eyed young chap. Greetings, but no introductions, were exchanged; the four talked rather constrainedly for a few moments, and then Fred and Jerry stepped out into the street, for their car was approaching. A rough voice called to them to halt, and when they looked round, Schwartz was there with his hand on the collar of the hard-eyed stranger.

"You're pinched, the bunch of ye!" proclaimed Schwartz angrily. "Come back here, now!"

"Why, what do you want?" demanded Jerry.

"None o' your lip! Come back here!" Jerry and Fred obeyed reluctantly; and the car went by without stopping. Angry though he was, Jerry saw a signal pass between Van and the tough-looking youth, though for a moment nothing came of it. Schwartz led the four to a patrol-box, called reinforcements, and then turned to gloat over his prisoners.

"Nice bunch o' crooks you are!" he said.

"Who says we're crooks?" demanded Van, suddenly belligerent.

"I say it, you damn' wop!" returned the detective.

"I aint a wop, an' you're a liar!" retorted Ivan. Schwartz answered with a blow which Van dodged; and then, to Jerry's amazement, the boy clinched. They scuffled a minute before the officer got an arm free; and then the Russian boy dropped to the sidewalk, knocked out. The patrol bus came up, but there were only three prisoners to ride in it. The hard-eyed youth had disappeared.

At the station Van and Jerry were shoved into the same cell.

"What did you want to start a ruction for?" Jerry demanded. Brusileff raised his aching head and answered in a low tone:

"That's Slifken. They want him for that 'L' station job out south. He was in it, I guess, but he was good to me in the reform school, an' I wanted him to get away."

"He got away, all right," said Jerry. "But what about the rest of us?"

"You aint hurt any," said Van. "Schwartz had you pinched before I started anything."

"That's true," admitted Jerry grudgingly. "Good Lord!"

"What's the matter?" asked Van.

It was minutes before Jerry answered. He had just realized that in all probability he would have to lie in jail till Monday morning. He was past seventeen, which cut him off from the privileges accorded to prisoners under that age. He could not get out except on bail—and who would know that he needed bail? He and Fred were not expected back till Sunday night, and if they did not come then, each family would think both boys at the other place. They were helpless, unless some officer would transmit their plea for aid.

"They wont," predicted Van, who came and went at his own sweet will, and whose absence for a week would excite no remark. This was an old story to him, and he saw no use fussing about it. "Schwartz has got a drag here, an' he's fixed it so nobody 'll listen to you. He's fierce, that guy is."

It was a true prophecy. Saturday night, Sunday and Sunday night the boys lay in jail; and it must be owned that Jerry cried more than once, especially in the dark hours when no one could see. His job was gone; he was marked as a jailbird, and doomed, so he imagined, to perpetual disgrace. He sobbed all the harder for trying to keep silent. Ivan tried to comfort him.

"Never mind, kid," he said soothingly. " 'Taint so bad when you get used to it, an' the judge'll turn you loose. I'm the one that's booked for the jug this trip, and I aint crying. Cheer up."

Jerry did not cheer up, but by Monday morning he had stopped lamenting. His face was grim as an old man's, his short upper lip curled back from his teeth in something very like a snarl when Schwartz came to herd his prisoners into the Black Maria to go to the central building. In the bull-pen, a kindly faced woman asked him a number of questions which he answered with stony indifference. At last he was brought into court. Schwartz told the story, putting his best foot forward, but the judge was not quite satisfied.

"Do you mean to tell me," he asked, "that you have brought in two boys against whom you make no real charge, and let the one you had a right to arrest escape?"

The tone crimped Schwartz's vanity a bit, but he answered truculently:

"I'd have brought him in if it hadn't been for these birds. They need pinching, all right. This one started a rough-house, like I said, an' the others didn't help any."

"Do you need help to handle a boy like this?" demanded the judge. "What business had you to arrest him in the first place? He had no right to resist you, and I am going to punish him for it; but if you had been content with taking the young man you know to be a criminal, he would be here now, instead of these boys. —Jerry, Fred, you are discharged; I'm sorry you were arrested. —Van, I'll have to send you to the bridewell for sixty days. You resisted an officer, and let a dangerous gunman get away. —Schwartz, I think you'd better tell this story to your chief, just as you've told it here."

THE boys separated when they left the courtroom. Fred would have been glad of companionship, but Jerry wanted to be alone. The little house of life which he had built was in ruins, and he had not the heart even to clear away the débris. He went to the factory, found, as he expected, that his job was gone, drew his pay, and walked the streets till long past time to go home. Finally, tired out, he entered a pool-room and slumped into a chair at the back of the room. In a few moments a lad of about nineteen came over and sat down by him.

"Glad you got off," said the newcomer. There was no answer, and he went on:

"That Schwartz is a—" I am sure the reader would agree with the description, so there is no need to repeat it. "Van got stuck?"

"Yes."

"Rotten deal, but that's the way things go in this town." (The speaker never had lived in any other.) "They call me Romiskey, Rummy for short."

"I'm willing," said Jerry. The other did not resent his rudeness, but after a few more ineffectual attempts to get up a conversation, returned to his former companions. Jerry stayed till his usual bedtime, and then went home.

His efforts to find a job next day were half-hearted at best. His mind was too thoroughly absorbed by his grudge against Schwartz. Again and again the boy actually forgot where he was going while conjuring up punishments for his persecutor. Moralists have much to say about the wickedness of revenge, but the fact remains that the desire for vengeance is merely the wrong expression of a quality which humanity needs. It springs from a right and proper wish to redress the balance, and discourage further aggression. Van might pardon rather promptly such an injury as Jerry had received; but Jerry was made of other stuff. Only time or wise counsel could enable him to forgive; and both were lacking.

He saw Romiskey occasionally in the days that followed, and one night at the pool-room, a week after the release, that worthy came to the point.

"What you doing, now?" he asked.

"Nothing," said Jerry.

"Got enough money to live on the interest?"

"No."

"Then you'll be wantin' to make some. I can put you next to the way to do it. There aint no use of settin' here an' grouchin'. You're up against it. You wont get a job, an' if you do, you'll get fired. The bulls 'll see to that. They've got your number, an' they'll keep after you. You're marked."

The speaker paused; then he made an error.

"You might as well get in with the push an' cop off some easy kale," he said. "I'll put you wise. You'll get the blame for anything that breaks around here, anyway. When the bulls get down on a fellow, they never let up. They're down on you, an' you know it. It's all a graft. You might as well get your share. They're all crooked, bulls, lawyers, judges—"

"No!" said Jerry. He had encountered two judges, and felt that both were on the square. One, in particular, the boy wished he might see just now; and as for coppers, there was old Marks, as straight as a die. Jerry rose to his feet.

"You're off," he said. "Schwartz is a crook, but they aint all that way. Good night."

HE went out, followed by Rummy's malignant look. When Pope wrote that "hell hath no fury like a woman scorned," he showed that he had no experience of a crook scorned. Romiskey was a recruiting sergeant of the army of crime, and an active stool-pigeon besides. To be pushed aside by a mere honest dub was an insult which the young scoundrel was not likely to forget.

By sheer will-power Jerry drove himself to the settlement-house gymnasium; but the next night, tired after a day of unsuccessful searching for work, he stopped at the pool-room again. The place was full, and a number of the younger visitors seemed of the Romiskey type. Rummy, however, was absent. Jerry looked round, decided that he didn't like the bunch, and turned to go. At that moment Schwartz and his traveling partner appeared in the two doors, and behind them gleamed the stars of several bluecoats. Mark's persistent complaints had found unexpected backing in the private grudge of the ambitious detective, and the place was raided at last. Schwartz saw the lad who was his pet aversion, and caught him by the shoulder.

"I've got you this time!" he exclaimed. "Come along, you — — bohunk!" He gave the boy a jerk.

THOUGH Jerry had not reached his full strength, he was powerful for his years, and quick as a cat. At the insulting word and rough jerk, he struck like a cat, a smash on his enemy's unguarded jaw; and the detective went reeling. Catching his balance and losing his head, he charged with a roar; Jerry met him more than halfway with left, right, left, right, *right;* and this time Schwartz dropped. His partner rushed in with a blow which Jerry barely dodged; then Schwartz was up, and both men were at him.

"They're killing him!" screamed another lad as Schwartz aimed a brutal kick at the head of the now prostrate boy. On the word, there was a rush from the rear door, and Schwartz went down from a push just one degree less effective than a blow, and old John Marks stood over Jerry, club in hand.

"There's room for more'n one in the ambulance!" announced the old copper. On the surface it was a mere statistical statement, but Schwartz read another meaning into it, and he may have been right. Jerry braced up weakly on one elbow.

"You damn stiff!" he gasped. "I'll fight you—any day—knuckles or gloves! You don't dare—come outside—city limits —an' have it out! Big stiff!"

"Shut up, Jerry," commanded Marks, but the order was needless. The boy had slumped down in a faint.

MARKS sent word of Jerry's arrest to his friends; and within an hour a dozen men whom no police department could afford to ignore were at the station in the boy's behalf. Most of these were Bohemians; Mr. Masaryk's countrymen, less clannish as a rule than most of our immigrants, have a capacity for teamwork in time of need that any breed alive might envy. They were not alone, however. The fighting Quaker head of the settlement-house where Jerry attended gym was among those present; so was his Jewish family doctor, and the pastor of a struggling evangelical church which the boy never had entered. He was admitted to bail at once, and then the real struggle began.

If Jerry had not been blessed with strong backers, he would have gone to the reform school for a good period, for his offense in resisting an officer was grave and undeniable. If Schwartz had not owned a pull with the city administration, he would have been dismissed from the force, for his brutality was undeniable, too, and indignation at it ran high. As things stood, one influence neutralized the other, and produced a peace without victory, sure to be the precursor of another contest at the first opportunity. That contest was likely to be less unequal than the last, however. Schwartz had wearied his politician sponsors and alienated the sympathies of the uniform force at the station; Jerry, however, found unexpected friends and a new job.

This job was with a factory making certain automobile parts, with other mechanical specialties as a side-line. The head of the company was an old fashioned Yankee of the kindlier sort, an inventor who held more than thirty patents on his own devices, and something of a philosopher in his way. He made it a point to know everyone in his employ; he was "Uncle Seth" to all the older hands. He took to Jerry at the start. The boy returned the liking with interest, but was much surprised after a few weeks to be called to the office. Uncle Seth dismissed the stenographer with a nod, closed the doors and then said mildly:

"I'm going to give you a scolding, Jerry."

The boy did not answer, but the old man noted the hurt look, masked instantly by an air of stolid indifference, and went on:

"You're doing the work we gave you very well indeed, but that's nothing. Almost anyone I pick up on the street could do that. You've got brains for something better, but you'll never do better while you go on lugging that grudge."

"Grudge?" said Jerry wonderingly. "Oh!" —as understanding came to him.

"Yes, I mean your grudge against Schwartz, not against anyone here," said Uncle Seth. "I don't blame you for hating him, but you can't spend your energy hating anybody and do the kind of work that'll get you ahead."

"I'd like to kill him!" muttered Jerry gratingly.

"Guess I'd feel the same if he'd been after me the way he was after you, but that aint the point, son. Your lugging a grudge around doesn't hurt him, and does hurt you. Is that what you want?"

"No sir."

"Then quit it. Use your brains to push ahead in your work, and you'll climb so high that cheap grafter wont be within reach of you. Want to try it?"

"Yes!" The decision of the answer made amends for the abruptness of it. Uncle Seth nodded, well pleased.

"All right. Start with what's right under your nose. Go into MacNider's class. And Jerry—"

"Yes sir?"

"If you haven't got a good place to study at home, you can come into the office here, evenings. That's all."

JERRY got out, too pleased and flustered and altogether upset to be properly thankful for the very unusual opportunity thus accorded him. His friend, Meyer Erbstein, a Jewish boy who was taking a course in the shop as preliminary to entering a "college of salesmanship," noted the lad's shining face, and spoke of it.

"Unce Seth didn't bite your head off up there on the carpet, did he?"

"No," said Jerry. "He was mighty good to me. He called me down for carrying a grudge on that—Schwartz; but maybe I had it coming."

"You sure did," agreed Meyer. "Stand there at the bench, lookin' as if you was goin' to bite the tools in two! Gr-r-r! Bow wow! It don't pay."

"If it was me Schwartz had been pickin' on, I'd have a streetful of fun out of it. I'd kid him. I'd kid the life out of him. He's an easy mark, that way."

"How do you know?" demanded Jerry, in doubt.

"All them guys that get stuck on themselves is easy marks. Schwartz was around here yesterday—I hear there's some stuff been missin'. If he blows in again, I'll show you how to 'tend to him."

SCHWARTZ blew in the next day at noon. The workers had just finished their lunch, and Meyer, Jerry and some twenty others were clustered in one of the big doorways when the detective and his traveling partner approached. Meyer suddenly began to wipe his eyes and sniffle. Jerry regarded him with amazement.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"I'm thinkin' about me brudder!" —with another sniff. All signs of education were gone from his language, and he spoke rather louder than was necessary.

"What about your brother?" asked Jerry.

"He was workin' over on de Sout' side when it happened. He tanked up on boardin'-house prunes, an' lost his mind. Went bughouse, nuts, cuckoo. Nobody home, 'tall."

"Did you send him to an asylum?" asked Jerry, still marveling.

"Nope!" Another loud sniff. "Wisht we had. Wouldn't of disgraced the family, then. But the old man wouldn't stand the price, so they got poor Abe on the detective force. Gosh, it's awful!"

"I'll say it is!" exclaimed Jerry heartily. He understood the game now. Neither lad looked toward where Schwartz had halted, and was glowering like an apoplectic turkey gobbler. Meyer went on mournfully:

"Course, he's as good's the rest of 'em. Better'n some. He's lucky, some way. Went out lookin' for a flivver somebody'd pinched, an' fell right over a gang robbin' a julery-store. Outside guy stuck a rod in his face. Abe thought it was a cigar, an' took it away from him. Guess he'll get a medal for that. But it's awful to see him come around the house on his day off, wearin' his star on a string round his neck, an' struttin' up an' down, an' not knowin' nothin', not a damn' thing. Maw just cries her eyes out. . . . . Oh, I beg your pardon, Mr. Schwartz. I'm awful sorry! I never dreamed you was near!"

"That's a damn' lie!" The detective's utterance was thick, as if he had been

drinking, and he gripped Meyer's shoulder and shook him. "You knew I was there all the time. You're pinched!"

"All right," said Meyer resignedly. "The judge'll believe me. I'll tell him all about it."

Schwartz had been too blind with fury to think of this. He paused with a gasp. It was bad enough to be guyed this way before a gang of grinning boys and men, but to have the tale repeated in court, and perhaps printed in the newspapers—

"I—I'll get you for this!" he threatened huskily. His partner, laughing, interrupted from the sidewalk:

"Aw, quit bein' a damn fool," he called genially. "They've got your goat. Come on."

"That's the way to handle 'em, Jerry," said Meyer when Schwartz had vanished. "Don't fight 'em. That's their game. Kid 'em. Kid hell out of 'em, do it so they don't dare take you into court."

"He'll lay for you about something else, though," said one of the lads, who spoke from experience.

"Let him lay," returned Meyer. "He can turn into a hen, for all I care."

THIS method of dealing with a persecutor was quite beyond Jerry's reach, but the episode cheered him, and started him off on the new tack in a good humor. MacNider was teaching the elements of mechanical engineering to a class which met twice a week, evenings. Jerry joined the group. Three other nights, he was in the office, studying—which with gymnasium once a week left him little time and less inclination to grouch or get into mischief, though his teeth still bared instinctively at the mention of Schwartz's name. Nearly three months of this régime had passed when on the way to gym one night Jerry heard his name called as he passed an alley. He turned back, suspicious and with ready fists; and then his face cleared.

"Why, hello, Van! I was wondering about you the other day. How are things?"

"Got a place we can talk?" returned Ivan, without noticing the question.

"Um-m—yes, there wont be anyone in the library at this time. Come on." Van emerged from the alley with a cautious glance around; and Jerry led his guest to a corner of the settlement-house reading-room which, as he had predicted, was empty. He motioned the older boy to a chair and asked:

"In trouble again, Van?"

"No. You are, an' don't know it!" was the startling answer.

"What do you mean?"

"You're workin' at Briscoe's machine-shop, aint you? An' you stay down about three evenin's a week in the office, don't you? Well, you're due to get beaned Friday night, an' if you wake up, they'll have it framed to say that you let the crooks in!"

Jerry's spine was tingling as he leaned forward in his chair. "What crooks?" he demanded. "Spill it all!"

VAN spilled it. The night watchman at the shops was a crook. He had furnished a duplicate key of a side door of two second-rate yeggs, who were to enter Friday evening, when the firm was supposed to have a good deal of cash on hand. The crooked watchman would call Jerry from the office, and one of the yeggs would lay him out. Then they would blow the safe, get the loot, tie up the watchman for a blind, and untie Jerry. The watchman's story backed by circumstantial evidence, would incriminate the boy, and his knockout would be laid to a dispute with his criminal companions. "It's a pipe," concluded Van.

"How do you come to know about this?" demanded Jerry.

"Rummy," was the answer. "I saw he'd got something, an' I managed to be where I could listen when he passed it to Schwartz. He's been stoolin' for that guy the last year. The yeggs 'll leave the door unfastened for a quick get-away, of course, an' Schwartz an' his pal are goin' to come in an' make a darin' pinch of the desperate burglars! Can't you see him swell up at the idea? He'll help the frame-up as far as you go, though; he just licked his chaps at the chance to get you?"

"Is that straight, Van? Honest, now, is it?"

Van rose. "If you think I'm lyin', just stay in that office alone Friday evenin' an' see. They're comin' then, because they think that's when the big money's in, an' because the watchman insists on havin' you there to take suspicion away from him. Now—can you let me out the back way?"

Jerry let him out, and neglecting the gym class, went back to the library. He had not the smallest doubt that Van spoke the truth; indeed, there was no conceivable reason why the boy should invent such a tale. Jerry felt a burning desire to

arm himself and frustrate the plot alone, but his sturdy sense told him that this was impractical. He must tell some one, and he might as well begin at the top and tell his employer. He called up the Briscoe home, asked a question, got a favorable reply, and took the next car in that direction.

UNCLE SETH heard him through, and nodded.

"What kind of a chap is this Ivan?" he asked when the story was finished.

For answer, Jerry told the incident of their joint arrest. Briscoe had heard it before, but never from that angle.

"You think he's telling the truth?" queried the old man.

"Yes."

"Well, I guess he is. Don't see why anybody would cook up a yarn like that, and from what you say, he's square with his friends, even if he isn't quite straight. Well, Jerry, my boy, I think you'll have a revenge on Schwartz that'll beat anything you dreamed of when you wanted to kick the top of his head off and use it for a drinking-cup. Just leave this to me."

He took the boy into his library, entertained him for two hours with drawings and models of strange machines and pictures of great engineering works, then dismissed him with instructions to hold his tongue and not worry.

The blinds of the Briscoe office were drawn as usual Friday evening, but enough light escaped to show that the place was occupied. Schwartz and his partner, safely ambushed, saw the two yeggs slip in from the alley, open the side door and vanish inside. The partner wanted to follow at once, but Schwartz, who was in command of the expedition, demurred.

"We'll give 'em five minutes to get started, an' then catch 'em, right," he announced.

Five minutes passed—seven, eight, ten. And then, yielding to his companion's restless urging, Schwartz led the way in. The door was ajar, as they had expected. They slipped inside, closed and locked it; and then, with pistols drawn, made their way to the front of the building. There was a light in the office, but not a sound came forth. "Ready!" whispered Schwartz, who at least did not lack physical courage; and then he flung the door wide open:

"Stick 'em— What the hell—"

The first words were a shout, the last a gasp. And small wonder. Uncle Seth was sitting at his desk. Jerry stood at one side of him, grinning like the Cheshire cat. On the other side were Marks and a companion bluecoat, also exhibiting signs of pleasure; on the floor, neatly handcuffed, sat the crooked watchman and the two yeggs; and over them stood the captain of the precinct.

"Come in, Mr. Schwartz," said that official with lumbering sarcasm. "Come right in. You're late for the party, but there's always room for a faithful sleuth!" Then, feeling the ineffectiveness of any satirical speech he could muster, he roared: "What the hell do you think you're doin', anyway?"

"Why, I —we heard—" began Schwartz, but he got no farther.

"You heard!" thundered the captain. "Don't try to shove it off on Rapke! This is your doin'! There aint another man on the force dirty enough for it—or damn fool enough, either!" he added with a snort of disgust.

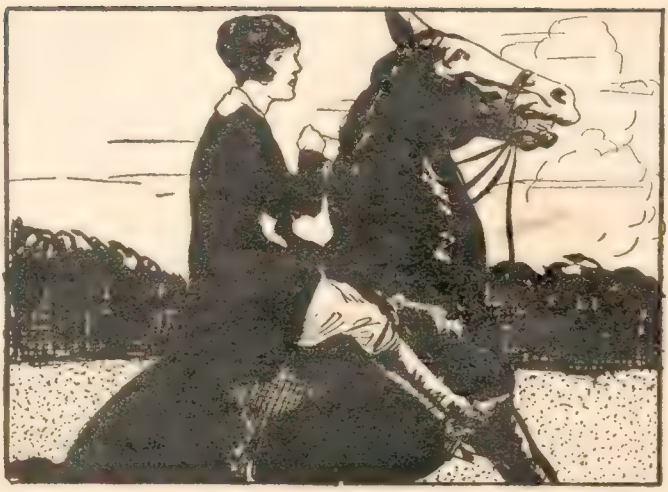
"But I—I—" Schwartz began.

"None of your lip!" shouted the captain. "Your stool pigeon tells you this crib's goin' to be cracked! You don't pass the word to the man on the beat; no, you're anxious to see him get in bad! You take chances on the crooks smashin' up property! You take chances on their killin' this kid! All you're thinkin' about is what a noble *Sherlock Holmes* you're goin' to be! Well, that dream's over. If you stay on the force, you'll travel beat, I can promise you that. You couldn't detect a goat by the smell, an' you've had your last chance to try! Be on hand to answer the charges I'm goin' to prefer against you tomorrow. Now beat it!"

SCHWARTZ beat it. As he walked dazedly away, he thought of many things—of the captain's anger, of Jerry's grin, of his own evil luck, but chiefly of a consideration that no one back in the office would have guessed. He was marveling that he, of all men on the force, should have gained a permanent, unalterable position on the lobster list.

Another of Dr. Knapp's fine stories of Young America in the melting-pot will appear in our forthcoming November issue.

This thrilling South African romance is the work of a writer who has traveled far about this little world and who knows his Cape country well. What is still more important, he also knows well the difficult art of fiction-writing.



Big Sandy of

By MAGRUDER

ACROSS the blazing face of the great Karoo Desert staggered a naked white man. His face, back and arms were covered with raw red sores, where sun-blisters had burst or had been ripped open by the jagged thorns of the wait-a-bit bushes that maddeningly hedged his way. Merciless, the African sun poured upon him the full fury of midday.

Shading his eyes with his hand, he looked through the heat-waves toward the distant hill. At the foot of the tallest of the flat-topped *kopjes* he could see a number of tiny white dots—mere specks, they looked, at that distance. With a glare over his bleeding shoulder toward a gap in the range of hills behind him, he walked doggedly on.

Hour after hour he walked. The white specks at the foot of the *kopje* separated themselves and took form, the distinct form of the tents of the command to which he belonged.

His course now lay straight ahead. Only when he was warned by hiss or sight of a puff adder did he veer either to right or to left. Throat parched, tongue swollen, eyes two burning coals scorching the lids that half hid them, he staggered on toward the end of his journey. The sun was dropping over the rim of the world, a huge red ball that turned the spinning hills to crimson, cinnamon and gold when he crossed the tiny *donga,* waded a small stream that lost itself farther out in the desert, and stumbled blindly into camp between the first two rows of tents.

Startled shouts greeted him, changing to violent oaths as he fell face downward on the sand. Hard hands tenderly lifted and carried him to the big tent of the commanding officer, a Kimberly doctor whose commission dated from the outbreak of the first Boer war.

WHEN Corporal Jameson—called Alexander on the company's books and Sandy by his mates—was able to leave his bed he obtained twenty-four hours' leave "on urgent private business."

He left camp long before daylight; it was dusk when he returned, mounted on a large white horse and leading another which bore the Queen's broad arrow on hoof and flank. Herded before him through the sandy waste were five naked men, one of them with a great flowing beard.

Laughter and shouts of approval this time greeted him. He gave no sign that he heard, but kept steadily behind the five naked men till they stood before the tent of his captain.

Conflict is the keynote of this spirited novelette: conflict of Briton and Boer, of white and black, of man and beast. And it is not only interesting because of its action, but for the sake of its unusual background and picturesque characters

the Veldt

G. MAURY

Out from the tent came the captain.

"What's all this, Corporal?" he demanded.

" 'Tis just that I'm getting a bit of my own back," said Sandy. "Here you see Oom Piet Schlatte and his sons. Three weeks ago I went to their farm beyond the *nek* in yonder hills to ask a drink of water. They took my horse, my rifle and my clothes. Today—"

He finished with a wave of his hand toward his captives, who were shivering in the rapidly chilling air of the African twilight.

He tossed them the bundle of clothing he had strapped to his saddle. "Put on your things," he commanded.

The Boers obeyed, though the rough cloth was torture to their sun-blistered bodies.

Jameson dismounted and threw the bridle of the white horse to the old man with the beard.

"As the eldest and as a minister of the gospel, Oom Piet can ride," he said, mounting his own horse. "The rest of you can walk."

"God will avenge this!" yelled Oom Piet, his bearded face convulsed with fury and shame at the indignities heaped upon him by this *rooinek*.

"Bah!" said Jameson as he wheeled his horse and rode away. "What kens God o' sic as ye?"

A week later came the disgrace of Majuba Hill.

After that Jameson, who had come to South Africa to establish a farm, now sickened by what he considered the dishonor put upon the name of Englishman, moved far to the north with his young wife and six-year-old boy.

But through the years that followed, the consequences of that day when he herded five Boers like cattle across the veldt dogged him, clinging to his every move like a shadow that could not be left behind.

CHAPTER II

ONE hot day fifteen years after Majuba Hill had been lost and won, a Cape cart jiggled to an uncertain stop in front of the tiny hotel and store that marked the business center of Pietsdorp and disgorged its one passenger, a tall, broad-shouldered chap whose flat back, narrow hips and erect carriage spoke of military training.

From the rear of the cart the Hottentot

driver tossed down a handbag, a roll of luggage and a gun-case. Then, while the passenger gathered up his belongings, the driver snapped his whip and disappeared, cart and all, behind a low mud wall which bounded the path to the stables. When the rattle of his cart had ceased, not a sound could be heard. Silent, and seemingly untenanted, the little cluster of tin-roofed, whitewashed buildings threw back, with vicious directness, the blazing rays of the South African sun.

The tall man walked to the veranda of the store and pitched his things into its shade. Then he turned to look over the landscape with the semi-familiarity, semi-curiosity of one revisiting, after many years, a place once well known. The stillness and silence depressed his spirit.

Suddenly his face lighted. Round the corner of the store came toward him the slouching figure of a Hottentot garbed in a single garment, a pair of gigantic trousers that had once been black but were now faded a greenish tinge, and spotted with dirt.

"Baas!" exclaimed the black man.

"Piet!" said the youth, a curious little catch in his voice. "Never thought you'd be at the old place still. How's everybody? Big Baas? Is he all right? And Dingaan and Ah Tom and Tamme—are they all right?"

Piet, smiling a wide-mouthed grin while this flood poured upon him, nodded with each question.

"Them all very fine, baas," he said. "Big Baas send me here every day for two-three weeks with horses for you. Him say can't tell when Little Baas Sandy come home."

"Afraid I'd duck the trip after ten years in England, was he? Ten years," he went on, "is a long time for a Hottentot boy to stay in one place, eh, Piet?"

"Majuba Farm good place stop," grunted the Hottentot. "Big Baas good man work for."

STILL smiling, the white man ordered the black to bring around the horses while he went inside the store. There he found, and recognized, Oom Paul Pelletier, a Boer of French Huguenot extraction two generations back, who, despite his rough speech, retained some of the grace of his gentle forebears. The newcomer arranged with him to leave some of his heavier luggage behind in the store until one of the farm wagons could call for it, and went back outside to wait for Piet and the horses.

How the place did reek with memories! Even the dirty little apology for a porch, the earth floor studded with worn peach-stones and rank with refuse, carried him back to the day when his grim-eyed, silent old father had stood there with him waiting for the Cape cart to start—the Cape cart that was to carry him off for England and school.

And still, after all that time, the outline of the hills against the northern horizon was just as he remembered it. Even the flat-topped, boulder-strewn *kopje,* with the road to the river winding dusty and white around its base, looked as it had looked to him that day ten years ago.

Piet rounded the corner of the store once more, this time leading two great stallions.

Beautiful specimens of the Africander bred from Australian Waler stock were these horses, necks and shoulders showing signs of the cross with the Arabian blood several of the well-to-do farmers of the district had imported to improve the breed. One of them was a blood bay, with white forefeet and a snowy white tail. The other was a chestnut, and both were sunburned and rugged-looking.

On the bay was a military saddle. The white man patted his cartridge-belt to make sure it was filled, slung over his shoulder his Lee-Medford rifle, and settled himself in the saddle with a lithe spring that started the Hottentot and the storekeeper both grinning.

"Little Baas has not forgotten how to ride," said the black in his native dialect as he climbed to the back of the chestnut.

"Not until thy father's snake shall come back to thy mother's kraal will I do that," came the quick response in the same tongue, and Piet cackled with renewed laughter and delight.

Then, in a long, swinging lope that left town and *kopje* swiftly behind them, white man and black cantered down the dusty road in the direction of the distant river.

Their way led them through the tall, thick grass of the plain. Stirred by a brisk breeze, this grass became an undulating sea of silvery gray, sloping down on one side to a dark green boundary of mahobohobo and baobab trees, laced together with clambering convolvulus and a thick undergrowth of mimosa and thorn bushes.

On the other side of the road the grass-covered plain swelled upward to meet the lower flanks of the hills. These, the white man saw—and remembered with a little thrill associated with past youthful adventures—were clothed in dense underbrush through which, at intervals, cropped great gray and red boulders. Gullies, too, there were in those hills, wide crimson slashes worn deep by winter torrents.

THE two horsemen rode silently through the silvery gray sea and climbed a slight ridge which on the river side dipped sharply toward a drift, as a ford is called in South Africa. From the crest of this ridge the white man could hear the broad stream, its dignity forgotten, babbling like an old Kaffir woman as it swept over the small stones and gravel of the shallows.

As they began the descent, this pleasant sound was ripped into by a ragged volley of shots. The Hottentot jerked out a frightened scream, drove his bare heels against the side of his horse, and dashed down the slope toward the drift.

The big bay, held by its rider, reared and pawed furiously in the air. Before it could be brought to earth again, another volley whistled by, and a tiny nick was clipped from the horse's ear. Taking the single bar bit in his teeth, bay followed chestnut in a wild scurry of hoofs down the road.

In mad haste to escape the peril behind him, the horse put its foot into one of the innumerable gopher-holes that spot the country and rolled over on its side.

The grass on the ridge stirred only with the breeze. No more shots were heard.

The big bay staggered to its feet, but its rider lay still and white on the grass. Seemingly ashamed of its fright, the horse stepped off a few paces and began to graze, lifting its head quickly as a rattle of hoof-beats sounded from the other side of the stream, and a black horse came bounding and splashing across the drift.

The rider of the black horse, a girl whose fair skin the South African sun had failed to mar, pulled her mount upon its haunches and flung herself off beside the young man. Just then the youth opened his eyes.

Seeing the girl bending over him, he smiled a friendship-making smile.

Their eyes met and questioned each other. Before a word was spoken between the two, a deep blush tinged the round white throat of the girl with crimson, but her dark eyes did not waver. And he, his effort to rise arrested, leaned on his elbow and looked long at her, while his face also slowly reddened.

"Are you hurt?" she asked, and he noticed that her accent was more French than Dutch. "They did not hit you?"

"Nary a hit," said the man, who had recovered his breath, and was making a scramble for his self-possession and his hat.

He got the hat, and stood holding it in his hand.

"Permit me," he began with his friendly smile. "I am Alexander Jameson, son of Alexander Jameson of Majuba Farm, across the river and over the Nek."

HE paused expectantly. But instead of replying in kind, the warm light in the eyes before him died away to a frosty stare, the soft line of the red lips hardened and the girl wheeled back to her mount. Before he could offer assistance, she gave an easy little spring and as lightly as a springbok leaping a stream, swung herself into the cumbersome man's saddle, jerked her horse around, and was off without even so much as a glance in his direction.

Young Sandy stood staring after her, amazed and vaguely troubled. What had he done? What had caused this sudden change in mood?

Still worrying over the problem,—the girl was so deuced pretty,—he walked over to his horse, gathered the reins and jumped astride.

With not another look at the ridge from which the shots had come, without even a thought of the shots themselves, so completely was his mind engrossed with the girl, he splashed across the drift. On the opposite shore he met Piet, who, hearing no more firing, had regained sufficient courage to ride back to look after his baas. Sandy greeted him with a look that made the black cower.

"Baas—" the Hottentot began, but Sandy stopped him.

"You left me there on the road when my horse threw me," he said, and the servant cringed at the implied reproof. "Suppose those people who fired on me had been Matabele warriors."

With his own words the strangeness of the attack upon himself—a man without enemies, virtually a stranger in this land

—swept over him. Other things—the fall from his horse, the girl, their slow locked glance that hinted of some inner, unnamed significance in their sudden meeting, her puzzling change of manner later—all these things had driven from his consciousness the ambush and the possible reasons therefor, if there were reasons. Now he was wondering.

"Are the Matabeles on the warpath again?" he asked Piet.

"No, baas."

"Well, then, who the devil would be trying to shoot me?"

"I don't know, baas."

For some time after that they rode in silence, Sandy still pondering the problem. If Piet was right, and it was not the Matabeles who had secreted themselves in the thick grass of the ridge to fire at him, then who was it? His thoughts jumped back to the girl. Who was she? Why had she come dashing down upon him as he lay there unconscious? And why had she left him in that unceremonious, unaccountable way? Where did she come from? Could it be that she—

"Piet," he said slowly, "is there around here a young white woman with a face like a wild rose flower, eyes like the midnight when there is no moon, and hair like the sun as it sinks back of the *kopje?* She rides in a man's saddle on a big black horse."

"Yesse, baas," said the Hottentot, who had listened attentively. "Just now she pass me." Then he dropped into his native tongue. "She is the White Flower. Her grandfather is Oom Piet Schlatte, at the head of the valley yonder. Her father, Christian Schlatte, calls her Almée for her mother, who is dead."

SO that was it! The girl was a Schlatte. He had never known there was a daughter in the family.

Sandy recalled then, in its many details as he had heard them, his father's long feud with the Schlattes. Could it have been these Boers who had learned of his homecoming and had turned out to greet him with bullets from the cover of the jungle?

Once more memory of the girl's face, and the quiet sure look in her dark eyes, came to him. At the vision he swore aloud. Her father and grandfather might be guilty of such a cowardly attack. Of that he would have to make sure for his own peace of mind. But that the girl had been a party to it—never!

Another thought flashed into his mind. She had come dashing across the drift in the face of the firing, not from the ridge. What if she had learned of her family's plan to rid themselves of the son of their foe and rival and had come riding full speed to save him?

That thought held a sort of piquancy. But to associate the girl in any other way with the shooting, he could not.

The horses were climbing a *kopje* which commanded a view of the surrounding country. At its crest Sandy checked his horse and looked back at the ridge across the river. It lay quiet, the silvery sheen of the grass undisturbed by the slightest movement. Whoever his assailants had been, they had found other shelter, or lay still, completely hidden by the tall, thick grass, awaiting other victims.

A vulture, wheeling aloft, threw its shadow on the road. Sandy settled himself in his saddle and urged his horse onward again.

He rode in silence, skirting the foot of the hills until he came to a *nek* in the tumbled country. Through this Piet preceded him, and he emerged at last upon the broad level grass- and timber-land of the valley bottom. Allowing his horse to pick its own way, Sandy went on with his thoughts and memories, all changed now by the light that had shone in the eyes of a girl he had seen for but a moment.

Reconstructing his father's life in South Africa, he tried to see things from the windows of that undaunted Scotchman's soul.

In the years that followed Majuba Hill, Big Sandy Jameson found existence in Natal unbearable. He regarded the attitude of the British Government under Joseph Chamberlain and Gladstone as an insult to the spirit of the British people. He wanted to get away from his kind. Taking his wife and his six-year-old son, he had inspanned and moved all his belongings northward into the country of the Matabele, an offshoot of the famous Zulu tribe. Lo Bengula, son of Mosilikatse, had welcomed him, sold him a large section of the valley in which Jameson decided to settle, and had befriended him in the years that followed.

Young Sandy knew all this. He knew, too, that with the first Matabele war, his

father had sided with and aided the white settlers at Salisbury seventy-odd miles away, and that after Lo Bengula fled, the defeated and disgruntled Matabele had put upon the broad shoulders and ready rifle of the elder Jameson the blame for much of their disaster.

His own childhood had been much as his father wanted it to be. For five years, after going to Majuba Farm, he had run about wild, as free as the wind on the plain. Most of the time he was alone. Occasionally he was attended or accompanied by a great Zulu named Dingaan, namesake of the traitor brother of T'Chaka, but called "Bobby Burns" by Sandy the Younger, because his mother had told him that Bobby Burns was a great man. Except for his father, Dingaan was the greatest man young Sandy knew.

After the mother died, Big Sandy decided to send the boy away to England, to his own public school. The eleven-year-old youngster had made the trip to Durban in a Cape cart by himself, and from Durban on to England alone.

Public school was followed by a course in agriculture to get the fundamentals for the work he would later do, and this by a special course in reforestation. All this was behind him now; and the boy, once more in South Africa, was riding over the old familiar veldt back to his old home.

HE rounded a spur of red clay hill and came in view of another gentle rise behind which he knew lay Majuba Farm.

The peace of early evening lay over the landscape. Far to the right was the river, a silver thread winding through the green hills, hidden now and then by clumps of towering trees. Beyond the river from where he sat his horse, the ground rose steeply in great rock-covered hills that sloped down, as Sandy knew, into covered grasslands rolling away and away to the foot of the mountains that barred the northern horizon.

Sandy put spurs to his horse, caught up with and passed Piet, and broke into a canter that carried him swiftly to the crest of the rise. There he looked down upon his own home.

How good it all was to him! The farmhouse, made of brick manufactured by that jack-of-all-trades, his father, from red clay found not a mile away, stood four-square and sturdy to the weather. A broad veranda, fashioned of gray stone, caught the afternoon sun and shaded the front of the house.

In the background, and bigger than the house itself, was the barn, also made of red brick. On the far side of the barn was the huge oval of the cattle kraal, and beyond that the fenced-in "home pasture," where Big Sandy kept the blooded stock he brought upcountry to better the native breed.

But no matter in what other direction he might look, young Sandy's eyes always came back to the house. At last he saw what he had been seeking for—his father. The older man came out of a door and walked the length of the veranda and back again to the steps. His tremendous shoulders were as erect and his sturdy stride as assertive as they had been in the old, well-remembered days.

With a wild yell of joy, Sandy sent the horse leaping down the incline to the whitewashed gate. Leaving his mount to Piet, he swung open the gate and hurried up the walk toward the house.

Big Sandy had stepped from the veranda and was coming to meet his son. The next thing that happened was typical of their blood.

Both men stopped short for an instant. Then each began walking stiff-legged toward the other. When they were near enough, each extended his hand, and simultaneously, and as casually as though Sandy had come back from a night with a friend a mile away, said:

"How do you do?"

Their hands, though, told a different story. The clasp was long, and the grip the elder Sandy gave the younger would have crushed the fingers of a less powerfully built man.

Then Big Sandy, allowing the touch of Scotch that was the sign of emotion with him to creep into his accent, asked,

"Did ye meet Bobby Burns?"

"I did not," replied Young Sandy, grinning at the nickname. It was so singularly inappropriate to the huge black form he remembered as Dingaan's.

"Never mind, lad. He'll be back the noo."

Again that touch of Scots. After all, one's only son does not return from a ten years' absence in a far country every day in the year.

The two entered the house, still kept, Sandy noted, as his mother had trained the Chinese servant, Ah Tom, to keep it.

"Ye'll be wantin' to wash up after your ride," the father suggested. "Don't be too long. Dinner'll be ready by the time ye're doon."

CHAPTER III

LEAVING his rifle on a pair of huge buffalo horns that bore several such weapons, Young Sandy, bag in hand, raced up the two flights of stairs to the little attic room that had been his as a boy. It had been left unchanged. There was the same home-made bed, rough but exceedingly comfortable—he had never slept quite so well in any other bed. There was the table his father had made for him, covered with the same cloth his mother had embroidered. Even the books in the homemade bookcase were the same he had put away in ragged little rows ten years before.

For years, school had been home to him. Even after he had reached Pietsdorp, where memory had crowded him with unforgotten objects, the sense of unreality that had accompanied him throughout the homeward trip had still persisted. Now it was gone. He was back where he belonged.

With the comfortable feeling a chap has nowhere else so much as in his own home, Sandy opened his bag, spread his things out on the bed and the dresser, and began to get ready for dinner.

It was dark outside when he left the window of his little room and descended the stairs. In the dining-room, which was lighted by large oil lamps, he found his father waiting for him. The older man was standing by the mantel, smoking a long-stemmed Dutch pipe, with two glasses of whisky and water on a small table at his right.

He nodded toward the glasses. "Take one," he said brusquely. "I've mixed it up for you as your mother used to mix it for me. Thought you might like a nip before dinner."

Father and son, in silence, touched glass to glass.

Ah Tom came in, and there was much smiling and chattering before the two Jamesons sat down to a dinner that would have shamed many a hotel in the midst of civilization. Big Sandy was a stickler for good food, and Ah Tom was a Chinese artist who had learned his technique in the hard school of a Royal Navy wardroom mess.

Not until they had finished their black coffee, and were smoking their pipes on the cool veranda, did Young Sandy tell of the ambush above the drift. Big Sandy listened silently till the tale was finished.

"It'll be the Schlattes, of course," he said then. "The old fight's grown more bitter since I found coal on my land six months ago, and not being sure where the vein ran, bought, through a third party, three hundred acres of their land on this side of the river.

"I'm not ready to begin developing yet," he went on. "We're still a long way from the railroad. I was just taking time by the forelock. Anyway, I bought some o' their land, and they found out later that 'twas me that bought it, and that I had found coal. Then, putting that with other things ye'll remember, they went wild."

He puffed quietly at his pipe.

"I'll not say 'twas any of their doings, mind ye," he added, after a while, "for I've no proof that it was; but three times lately I've been shot at. Once they got my hat, and once they cut the breast of that old coat your mother liked me to wear to church. I'll never wear it again."

"It's war to the knife, then, is it?" said Young Sandy, with a little laugh that belied the feeling at his heart, for he was thinking of the girl who had knelt beside him on the grass.

"Weel, I'd no put it just that way," his father replied. "But it will be well to watch out. So far, they've had their come-uppances when we've met, but if they—"

Again the smoke went up from their pipes in silence.

FROM far away came the howl of some wandering jackal. Young Sandy arose, and walking slowly, moved down the path and over to a corner of the yard his mother had called her garden. A few plants were still growing there, the flowers of old England she had loved. He could see in the moonlight that efforts had been made to keep the garden as she had left it, and he guessed, and rightly, that it was his father's own hands that tended this bit of ground.

Sandy loved the little garden. It was here that he used to come with his mother, and while she worked with the plants, he too would dig in the soft earth and imagine that he helped.

Or perhaps it would be evening. Then they would both watch the moonlight turn the far-off mountains into deep blue masses with silver glints, just as it was doing now, and the near-by hills and *kopjes* into silver mounds. It was this spot that he remembered oftenest during the lonely days of his first year at school. And as he stood in it once more, with the scent of the roses around him, a great peace was his.

His father, knowing where the boy was going, had not followed, but kept his chair. Young Sandy looked back from the glory of moonlit mountain at the solitary figure in the gloom of the veranda, still pulling at the long-stemmed pipe.

The younger man was too much of his father's breed to be a sentimentalist, but he understood better now than ever before the intense loneliness that must have been Big Sandy Jameson's for all these years. It had taken strength of mind and heart to fight off such loneliness. Sandy knew this, and felt a little glow of pride that his father had never weakened, but had been able always to stand by his ideals and to keep himself, in this far country, the clean, straightforward Scotchman he had been born to be.

A THUNDER of hoof-beats broke in on his thoughts, and over the rise in front of the house there poured a dozen horsemen.

At their head rode a big man with a flowing white beard. The huge white stallion he was riding reared high as he came to a sudden halt before the gate.

"Oh, Jameson!" called the rider. "O-he, Oom Sandy!"

"Aye," came back the noncommittal answer from the veranda.

"Is your son at home?"

"Aye," replied Jameson, slowly rising to his feet.

With that the white-bearded man dismounted, opened the gate and stalked up the path, leading his horse. After him rushed the mounted men, trampling over the smooth lawn.

"Get out of my yard, Schlatte, you and all of yours!" roared Jameson. "What do you want here?"

"My granddaughter," came the astonishing reply from the old Boer.

"Are you mad, man?" asked Jameson.

"Not mad," said the Boer. "God in His infinite wisdom has vouchsafed to us this knowledge. My granddaughter has disappeared. We know that she is here, for she was seen with your son. Where is she?"

"She is not here," Young Sandy answered, approaching from the garden. "I have not seen her since she left me at the drift."

The horsemen wheeled on the young man.

"You lie!" screamed one of them, a tall man with a black beard.

"Silence, Christian," said Oom Piet in Dutch. "I am spokesman here." Then, to Jameson:

"Neither you nor your son need lie to us. We know, through one who saw, that this son of yours rode off with Almée from Tugela Drift today. You are at the bottom of this, you and your ungodly lust for vengeance."

"Let me speak." In spite of the tumult at his heart, Young Sandy's voice was calm. "Your granddaughter, if it was she, was with me only for a moment. She came upon me from across the drift after I had been thrown from my horse. She was gone before I had remounted."

His words drew forth a growl of disbelief. Only the man called Christian raised his voice.

"He has hidden her away in the jungle," he cried. "We can make him show us where."

The elder Schlatte's hand went up in command.

Instantly half a dozen rifles were leveled on the senior Jameson, while four of the riders dismounted and closed in on Sandy.

"If either one of you stirs," said the white-bearded Boer, "my boys will shoot. You know, Jameson, whether they can hit."

While their leader was speaking, one of the men threw a noose over Young Sandy's head and tightened it about his neck. Two others seized his hands and bound them behind him with strips of *rimpi,* the South African rawhide.

Trussed up like a chicken for roasting, the young man was thrown face downward across a led horse, and bound fast with more strips of *rimpi.* The four men then remounted, and started away with their captive.

At a sign from Oom Piet, the others lowered their rifles and followed.

As their white-bearded leader climbed into his saddle, the Scotchman spoke.

"Ye've the upper hand this time, Schlatte," he said, "but my turn will come. For this I'll strip you and yours as bare as I did once twenty years ago. Not an inch of the land ye own will I leave you, and ye'll be hunting your food with the Bushmen."

The old Boer raised his hand as if about to speak, then let it fall, and rode off through the gate and over the hill. Young Sandy heard him join the others where they waited for him, heard him give a few brief orders. Then the party divided, four going on with Sandy as his guard, the others with Oom Piet.

After their short halt the men with Sandy took up a rapid gallop. Hanging head downward on the horse, his position was torture. Dust thrown up by the feet of the horses in front of him filled his nose and mouth, almost choking him. Blinded by the dust, and by the pain in his head, he soon had no idea where he was—could not even tell in what direction he was going, and the few words his captors let fall told him nothing.

For hours, it seemed to him, the ride continued.

At last he felt the beast he was on stiffen itself to pace slowly down an incline. A tinkle of water came to his ears. The horse splashed through a stream and started up another incline. Then Sandy fainted.

CHAPTER IV

ONE great fist raised threateningly, the elder Jameson stood staring at the dust-cloud—all that was left to him of the son who had just come back to him from ten years overseas. Then a stream of profanity burst from his lips, rolled out on the silence that followed Oom Piet's departure, and was bitten off short.

A moment later came the swift *pat-pat* of feet on the hard ground of the path beside the house, and a gigantic negro swung at full speed around the corner.

It was Dingaan, the "Bobby Burns" of Sandy's boyhood. Except for the *moucha* draped about his middle and the streamer of red flannel floating out from the brass collar encircling his neck, his huge black form was free and unhampered by clothing of any sort. In his hand he carried a big knobkerrie. Coming before Big Sandy, he halted and saluted.

Swiftly his master told what had happened.

"Follow those Dutch dogs, Dingaan, and find out what they have done with the young baas," was Jameson's command. "If your young master needs help, stay and give it to him. Otherwise, do nothing; but do not come back to me without news."

With a quick jerk, Dingaan loosed the flannel streamer from his brass collar, rolled it into a hard ball and tossed it on the veranda. Thus, stripped for action, he moved swiftly to the gate. There outside the gate, his nose up like that of a great dog, he sniffed the air, then started off with a long loping stride that carried him up and over the rise as quickly as the mounted men had gone.

The moon, now high in the east, looked down over the red brick buildings and the peaceful cattle-kraals, and on Big Sandy Jameson, standing silent beside the little garden. A plan of action was framing itself in his mind.

Passing around the house to the rear, he looked toward the servants' huts.

"Piet!" he yelled. "Come here, you scoundrel!"

There was an answering cry, and Piet came running up to his master.

Jameson's treatment of the Hottentot was altogether different from that which he had accorded the Zulu. Dingaan had been told all that happened. His master had talked to him as man to man—treated as much like an equal as a white man in Africa can afford to treat any black. Piet was simply given orders.

"You go to Schlatte's kraal. Hide in the grass and watch till the old baas and his men get home. Don't let them see you or you'll taste *sjambok*. And bring back word to me of all you see and hear. Hurry! Take the short cut across the bend of the river and run!"

"Yesse, baas."

Piet paused only long enough to slip off his big ragged trousers. Clean and naked to the breeze, he fled through the gate and over the hill like a startled eland.

Again Jameson turned toward the huts and called:

"Tam-me!"

Answer was made in a sort of yelp, and a third negro came dodging in and out of the bars of moonlight that shone through the branches of the trees.

Tamme was one of the few remaining

Bushmen. For years he had come and gone about Majuba Farm. Like all of his tribe, he could not stay long in one place, but in his animal-like fashion, he loved the big Scotchman with a devotion even Dingaan could not excel. And he was capable of going anywhere he had once been, and of carrying a message to anyone he knew. It was for this he was now called.

Squatted on the ground in the moonlight, his flat, wrinkled face upturned to his master, he listened eagerly while Jameson uttered a series of various sounding clicks and grunts that told him, in his own language, what he was to do. Then he waited while his master went into the house.

Jameson went to his desk and hastily scribbled a note. This he gave to the Bushman, and watched him melt into the shadows as silently as the shadows themselves lifted and wavered in the moonlight.

Having done what he could, the big Scotchman went back to his chair on the veranda, struck a match to his pipe and composed himself to wait.

ALTHOUGH he sat quiet as the hills around him, there raged within him a fury of hatred and anxiety. He had never forgiven the Schlattes their first outrage against him, not even though he had, as he told his old captain, "got a bit of his own back." From time to time, since they had been, in a sense, his neighbors, other things had happened to deepen the old grudge; and now, heaped upon everything else, they had taken his son from under his very eyes. What they might do to the boy, the father could only conjecture.

"I'll break them!" he muttered, his great, gnarled hand almost crushing the porcelain bowl of his pipe with its grip. "Old and young, all that are Schlattes, I'll break them body and soul, damn them all!"

Through the night he sat there. The moon sank out of sight behind the hills. The dawn-wind came up chill and sharp, and he shivered at his vigil, but he did not for a moment quit his chair, nor take his eyes from the winding ribbon of road that twisted out and up from his gate.

The sky to the east turned pink, then to glowing rose, and the sun shot up from the veldt. Almost instantly the cold of the dark fled, and a pleasant warmth filled the air.

It touched Big Sandy in his chair on the veranda, and he got up and strode back to the kitchen. Already Ah Tom was there, his yellow face bending over the big range Jameson had imported several years before, and which was Ah Tom's especial pride.

But this morning Ah Tom's master had no appetite for breakfast. He told Ah Tom not to set the table, and munched a hunk of bread and drank a gourd of cool milk before going out to the stables, where he saw to the feeding of the stock and the milking of the cows before he turned both cows and horses out to graze.

From the stables he went to the river pasture, where the five or six yoke of oxen he kept for rough work were feeding in the dewy grass, then went back to the house.

Neither Dingaan, Piet nor Tamme had yet returned.

Big Sandy entered the house from the rear, passed through the kitchen into the dining-room, and through that room into a big, cool, quiet room where he kept the books he loved, in shelves he had himself made. There were not many of these books, but they had all been read, some of them, like Keats, Coleridge, Burns, Shelley and Robert Louis Stevenson, many times. Here he also kept the account-books of the farm.

In one corner stood a cabinet made of a hard, red, close-grained wood, highly polished. Going to this cabinet, Big Sandy opened it and took out a number of documents and a huge map.

With these in hand, he swept from the top of a table in the middle of the room the litter of pamphlets and papers he found there, spread out the map, provided himself with a foot-rule and a scratch-pad from the table drawer, and set to work.

The map showed him not only all the land of Majuba Farm, but all lands adjacent thereto, or touching upon his. For more than an hour he studied it, checking over certain measurements, and making innumerable intricate calculations on the scratch-pad. Satisfied at last, he replaced map and documents in the cabinet, took from the mantel over the wide-mouthed fireplace a beautifully carved and colored meerschaum pipe. This, the most cherished of his pipes, he smoked only at the crises of his life.

With the stem clamped tightly in his firm white teeth, he went back to his chair on the veranda and settled himself to wait.

PIET came back about noon and reported that Oom Piet Schlatte and two of his sons had returned to the Schlatte farm in the early morning, that the girl had not been found, and more men were to join in the search for her.

Still there was no sign of young Sandy, nor of Dingaan, who would surely not return, Jameson reckoned, until he had found the lad. Once more the father took up his watch on the veranda.

Toward four o'clock that afternoon Tamme, the Bushman, trotted up from the rear of the house. Saluting with uplifted palm, he squatted down on the walk facing his master.

"*Koos, baas,*" he grunted, using the common dialect of the Cape Colony native.

"Speak," said Jameson, removing his pipe.

"It is done. The paper I gave to the white man with four eyes and hair on his face like a Boer. Tomorrow before the sun sets he will come to thee."

"Good," said the master. "Go thou and eat."

The Bushman vanished. A moment later his guttural grunt and clack punctuated the high-pitched singsong of Ah Tom in the kitchen. This lasted but a short time, for the Bushman doesn't dawdle over his meals; the house became very still, the low hum and buzz of insects in the garden serving only to intensify the stillness. Big Sandy drowsed.

That night again he kept his lonely vigil on the veranda, and slept not at all. It was a long night, and long the day that followed. Toward the end of that day, in his chair on the veranda, he drowsed once more.

He was aroused by the beating of a horse's hoofs. A white gelding that might have been—in fact was—a half-brother to the beast ridden by the Boer leader on the night of the raid, was coming down the rise at a long easy lope. His rider drew up at the gate, dismounted and threw the reins over a half horseshoe driven into the post. Jameson walked down the path to greet the newcomer.

"Welcome, Mr. Bradley," he said. "Piet will take your horse. Come inside. It's cooler in my office."

The two men went into the big cool room of the books and maps, and Jameson struck the gong which called the Chinese servant.

Mortimer Bradley was an Englishman, tall, sunburned, black-bearded, with quizzical keen eyes back of the heavy lenses he wore. He was not a frequent visitor to Majuba Farm. He and Jameson belonged to different political parties, and himself a lawyer and Jameson a farmer, they had not very much in common, though he liked and respected the big Scotchman.

"I've brought ye here, Mr. Bradley," Big Sandy began, with a curious sort of diffidence that left him as he went on with what he had to say, "on a business matter of considerable importance to me."

"So I reckoned from your note, Mr. Jameson," said the other formally.

"Ye'll remember that three months or so ago you bought for me a bit of land from the Schlattes—three hundred acres it was?"

"I remember," said the solicitor with a little smile. "A shrewd deal. You've found coal, I understand."

"Aye. I knew it was there before I bought the land. Now, if you'll just take a look at this map here on the table, you'll see how the vein runs. I made the map myself, and it's quite accurate."

With his pencil the farmer outlined the vein of coal; then he continued:

"But it's not for the coal that I care. Ye'll see the deposit ends with the three hundred acres ye bought for me. Now, I want the whole Schlatte farm, and I'll tell ye why." He jerked his head up.

"Night before last they, Oom Piet and his sons, together with some others, rode over here, held me up with their rifles, me all unarmed, and kidnaped my son Sandy, who'd just got back to me from ten years away at school."

A startled ejaculation broke from the usually urbane Englishman.

"I know what they intend doing with the lad, Mr. Bradley. Fifteen years ago, just before the battle of Majuba Hill, these same Schlattes caught me, took my horse and my clothes and turned me naked on the Karoo Desert."

"I've heard of that," said the solicitor. "And later you caught the five of them, stripped them, marched them to your command, and sent them back before the whole company."

THE gray Scotch eyes crinkled a little at the corners. "Ye have it right, Mr. Bradley. And for that the Schlattes have never forgiven me. They followed me here, and have buzzed around me like a swarm of *tsetses*. After they found out there was coal in the land they'd sold, and that it was I who'd bought the land, they went wild."

"One could hardly expect them to be pleased," remarked the Englishman.

"So they come here to my house, Oom Piet and Christian, the three other Schlattes and half a dozen more. They come here in a body, I say, and on the strength of some fancied notion, accuse me of having Christian Schlatte's daughter, the girl Almée, in hiding. They say they have proof that my son Sandy brought her here. When my son says this is not so, they take him by force and ride off with him. For that I shall break them."

The big Scot leaned forward.

"In what I'm going to say don't misunderstand me," he continued. "I want to cheat no one, not even the Schlattes. What I do want is to squeeze them out of the valley."

The lawyer nodded his comprehension.

"Now, this is the plan I've worked out, Mr. Bradley. I want you to get a clever agent to approach Oom Piet and Christian —the others don't count—and suggest that the coal land they sold is in the market again. It might be well," he proceeded, "to hint that I've bitten off more than I can chew, but that I'd not sell to them under any circumstances—that the matter can be arranged with them only through an agent, so that I will not know they are the purchasers until after the deal is closed.

"I paid fifteen hundred pounds for the land, as you know. Say that I am holding it at ten thousand. It's worth all that, and well they know it now. They have not that much money. Keep 'em danglin' for a while, and then say you believe you can borrow that amount for them on a mortgage on their farm. The farm isn't worth it without the coal land, but I shall advance the money—through your agent, understand, keeping myself out of sight all the time. They'll snap up the offer, for they want that coal land back."

"And then?" questioned the lawyer, watching the farmer intently.

"And then I shall foreclose the mortgage, for they will not be able to pay it off, nor renew it. They will be left with only the coal land, which will be incapable of development for several years, as you well know, Mr. Bradley. The coal land is impossible for farming purposes, and therefore, at present, unproductive."

"And then?" prodded the solicitor.

"You will come forward in person, Mr. Bradley, and offer to buy the coal land back from them, paying them ten thousand pounds, or even a trifle more. There's no more good farm land to be had in the valley. They'll have to trek, and I shall be rid of Oom Piet and his sons."

"You should have been a solicitor," said the lawyer dryly.

"Nay," replied the Scot, "I'm too honest for yon trade." He drained his glass, and Ah Tom announced dinner.

FROM his bedroom that night Bradley could hear the tramp of his host's restless feet on the veranda. Just as he got into bed, he heard voices.

"That's good, Dingaan," he heard Jameson say. "Go back to him and stay till he is able to be brought home."

Jameson came back into the house, and his guest heard him pass with quick, sure step up the stairs to his bedroom.

"Word from young Sandy," muttered the solicitor with a distinct feeling of relief. "He'll sleep tonight."

Then he crawled back into his own bed and dropped off to sleep. Before he left Majuba Farm the next morning, he told his host of the night that he had thought over the commission given him, and would see what he could do.

CHAPTER V

YOUNG SANDY'S first sensation when he came to himself was that he was cold. With a start he realized that he had been stripped of his clothing. With characteristic lack of imagination, the Boers had repeated upon him their offense against his father fifteen years before.

Then he became aware that a burning scurf ran round his body just under the arms. Touching it with the tips of his fingers, he found the place rubbed raw.

It was intensely dark around him, although overhead the brilliant stars burned in the intense blue of the South African sky. Instead of the murmur of the wind through leaves and the buzz of insects so much a part of the night-life of Africa,

all about him was silence. He was lying on rock, smooth as glass save for certain regular cracks which he could feel with his fingers, and with his cautiously outstretched toes.

Evidently he was on a solid base, and not on the edge of a precipice, as he thought might be more than possible.

He tried to sit up, succeeded, and found himself unspeakably sore and stiff. He lay down again, not daring to try to move around in the darkness, and waited for the dawn.

It came with a rush. Hardly had the stars begun to dim in the floor of the sky, till the sun was upon him.

By this time, thanks to his long tramps with Dingaan when he was a boy, he could fully realize what had been done to him by his father's vindictive foes.

Some thirty miles from his father's farm, nestling at the foot of a range of hills that formed stepping-stones to the higher mountains, were half a dozen oddly shaped hills of volcanic origin. Rising out of the thick grass that grew right up their base, these hills, when viewed from a distance, resembled nothing so much as smoky black egg-cups on a green cloth. Save for winding tracks that led up to the rim of one or two of them from the ground below, their sides were unbroken.

Sandy had never been inside one of these cups, but he knew he was in one now. The red, raw mark on his breast showed where the rope had chafed as the Boers were lowering him, but the rope itself was nowhere to be seen.

A more devilish trap could not have been planned by the utmost savage. Naked, without hope of obtaining water or shelter from the unyielding South African sun, he knew that he was facing death in one of its most gruesome forms. Burning at the stake would be merciful in comparison, for fire does its work quickly. Here, on these sizzling black rocks, he might linger for days before thirst, added to the agony of sunburn, would end his misery. To scale the walls was an utter impossibility. So far as he could see, they were smooth as glass, and without a break in them; and they rose fully twenty-five feet from the bottom of the cup. Volcanic boulders piled here and there around the walls shortened the distance six or eight feet in places, but this was not enough to be of any service to him.

He turned his attention to the floor of the pit, looking for some hole into which he could crawl for protection from the sun, which was already becoming more than he could bear on his naked skin.

HE had made more than half of the half-mile circuit of the cup before he came upon what he thought would serve. In the cataclysm that had formed his present prison a great slab, about twelve feet long and nearly as wide, had been thrown from the east brim of the cup to lodge, the lower end against a heavy boulder and the upper against the smooth wall, making a shady spot that seemed to offer a refuge.

Into this Sandy dived, only to find that the reflected heat from the wall and floor around him was almost as hard to bear as the sun's direct rays. Out he went again, braving the heat, and knowing that he must act quickly before the sun came overhead, and rolled and piled stones on the south side of his cave shelter until he had it almost completely screened from the sun. Then he went inside and stretched himself on the smooth floor.

Slowly the hours dragged by. He could trace their progress by the shifting of the beams of light that came through the interstices of the rocks of his shelter. The sun was beginning to drop when suddenly the silence that all day had wrapped him around like a garment was broken by a shrill chattering. Something menacing in the noise warned him that he'd better keep out of sight. Crawling to his hands and knees, he peered through a chink in the stones he had piled to make the south wall.

At first he saw nothing. Then from behind a heap of volcanic rocks he saw stalk out into the sunlight the granddaddy of all baboons. The hair on the huge beast's shoulders and head was beginning to gray, but there was no other sign of age in the long-armed, mighty figure.

Sandy was close enough to catch the gleam of the sun on the blue-black skin of the baboon's chest. As he watched, the big dog-teeth glistened, and the sharp little eyes darted swift glances here and there, but did not pause as the glance passed Sandy's shelter.

So far, he did not believe his presence had been suspected. Fascinated, he watched as a half-dozen of the monstrous animals appeared and came chattering up to their leader. Sandy cowered down be-

hind his rocks and prayed that their curiosity would not lead them to investigate his hiding-place. He knew what they could do to a man if they caught him, and especially to a man unarmed and naked. So while the chattering went on, sometimes coming nearer, at last going farther and farther away, the young man lay silent, motionless, hardly daring to breathe in the shelter of his rocks.

He lay still for some little time after the chattering had died away. Then he stood up and looked through a hole in the direction in which the noise had gone. There was neither sight nor sound of the baboons.

Sandy pondered this for a moment and then gave a start that carried him out of his pent-house. If the monkeys could come into and out of that cup, there must be some way through which he could win to freedom.

STILL listening intently, he made his way to the heap of piled-up stones around which the monkeys had come into view. Beyond this was a heap of shingle lying against the wall at a place where the smooth rock bent inward to form a sort of bay. Sandy passed cautiously around this heap of loose stones and shale, and found the open mouth of a tunnel.

It was so small he had to go down on his stomach and wriggle in head first. He wondered how the big baboon had managed. For a moment his body shut out the light, but as he drew his feet inside the tunnel, the space widened and deepened till he could stand almost upright. Listening always for baboons, he followed the gentle curve of the passage until every ray of light from outside was lost and he moved in complete and impenetrable blackness. Once he thought he heard the slide and sibilant hiss of a snake. He moved away from the sound, rounded an elbow, and, the tunnel narrowing again, crawled out on his hands and knees into full daylight.

He was now on a narrow ledge about halfway down the outside of the cup. Before him towered the mountains, closer than at Majuba Farm, startlingly distinct and clear-cut in that high, dry air. He had come out of the cup on the side opposite from his own home. As he remembered the lay of the land, there was no road leading to this cup. What he would have to do would be to follow the circuit of the little volcanic hill till he came to the spoor of the Boers who had brought him there, and then strike out through the jungle toward Majuba Farm.

He made his hazardous way down the steep side of the cup to the grass-land, turned to the left and started for the other side of the cup. The sharp stones at the base of the cup cut his tender feet, and he struck out into the grass, thinking the walking would be easier.

It wasn't. The strong, thick grass, in itself almost impassable, was intertwined with brambles, the thorns of which tore his flesh. Carefully he picked his path back toward the wall of the cup, intending to keep to the rocks till he came to the spoor made by the Boers.

A sharp hiss startled him as he stepped out on the rocks again, and an agonizing pain ran up his leg.

He knew what had happened. He had been bitten by a puff-adder, one of the most venomous of South African snakes; and through his brain ran the lightning-like thought that here was the end. His fight was over. If the Schlattes had but left him his knife, he could have incised the bite. And he could not reach it with his lips.

Like a tomtom in his head the blood began to pound.

He started running, unmindful of the stones that cut his feet. Harder and still harder he ran. The dull red glow of sunset covered and blinded him; the world turned black.

From somewhere in the infinite distance he thought he heard the sound of running footsteps. That was his last conscious thought. And then—

The drumming footsteps became one with the pounding in his head.

CHAPTER VI

WHEN Sandy came to himself, he heard still the drumming and the pounding in his ears. His tongue felt shriveled. Every bone and muscle in his body ached. With an effort he opened his eyes and made out in the gloom that he was lying in a native hut.

Slowly, for the slightest movement was agony, he turned his head toward the low, open door of the hut, and saw that it was light outside.

In a depression about the center of the

hut a tiny fire of dry wood was burning. Beside the fire Sandy saw a huddled figure, draped from head to foot in a *kaross*, or coat of fur, squatted on the ground.

The movement, slight as it was, roused the man by the fire. He lifted his head and called out something that brought a hurry of footsteps to the door of the hut. The hole darkened, and the next instant Sandy saw bending over him the huge form of Dingaan, the beloved "Bobby Burns" of his childhood. Then he felt his aching head gently lifted and something cool poured down his throat.

He dropped off into a refreshing sleep with the delicious consciousness that Bobby Burns was with him and all would be well.

How long he slept he did not know, but he knew from the sun at the low hole of a door that it was morning when he awoke. The same *kaross*-covered man crouched by the fire. Sandy lay still, watching him for a curious moment before he took in the rest of his surroundings.

The hut was the typical wattle and mud-daubed shelter of the savage, its floor beaten hard and studded with peach-stones embedded in the earth. From the sooty walls and roof dangled many weird objects—the mummied head of a crocodile, snake-skins, masks such as witch-doctors used before the coming of the missionaries, and bladders filled with things that rattled as the wind blew in from the entrance up to the smoke-hole. . . . . Without stirring, he closed his eyes and slept again.

WHEN Sandy awoke once more, Dingaan hung over the fire, toasting something that smelled delicious. The back of the big Zulu was toward Sandy.

"Dingaan!" called the boy and again, "Dingaan!" but the negro paid no attention.

"Bobby Burns! Can't you answer me?"

Instantly the black face twisted over the blacker shoulder to break into a vast grin that revealed two rows of shining teeth.

"What has happened? How did I get here? Does my father know? I thought I—"

In his eagerness he had raised himself on his elbow, but he was overcome by weakness and sank back on the soft furs, calling faintly for Dingaan.

"Be patient, little baas," said the big negro, in the sonorous Zulu speech he had taught Sandy in his babyhood. "It is a tale that will be better for the keeping. Thy father, the big baas, is well. He knows how things are with thee. Be patient."

"But tell me how you found me."

Dingaan rose, the broiling meat on its sharpened stick in his hand, and went to the side of the bed.

"Wouldst have the tale now, little baas, and wait for the food, or the food and wait for the tale."

"Hurry with the food," said the young master, his hunger sharpened by the smell of the cooking meat, "and give it to me with the tale."

The Zulu laughed as one laughs at the saying of a clever child, turned the meat on the coals, sprinkled salt on it, and when it was done, laid it on a clean slab of wood and took it to his patient. While Sandy ate, the big negro told him as much as he knew of what had happened.

He had not known the little baas had come home. Every day for two weeks he had been expected. He heard the Boers when they came, but knowing they were white men, he had not come to the house from the cattle-kraal until he heard the oaths of the big baas. Then, when his master had spoken, Dingaan had started on the spoor of the Boers.

The trail was easy to keep at first, but before long the horsemen began to separate. He followed their spoor, until only four were left. These he followed for several miles, till he came full upon them, seated on their horses and waiting. As he came up to them, one of them, Christian, lashed him over the shoulders with a *sjambok*. Then they wheeled their mounts and rode backward over the way they had come.

"I knew then," he went on, "that purposely I had been led to follow the wrong spoor."

THAT was just at dawn. It took him nearly all that day to puzzle out the tracks and reach the spot where the trodden-down grass showed him his master's captors had climbed one of the trails leading to the brim of the Big Cup.

"It was time for the cattle to go homeward. I began to make the ascent of the cup to let myself down from the brim. Then I looked around me; and back of me, over my shoulder, I saw thee coming out of the grass. I ran, and found thee

twisted as men are when the puff-adder has struck. Then I remembered."

"What?" asked Sandy. "What did you remember?"

"I remembered my father, Njambi here."

"Who calls me?" came from the queer muffled figure on the other side of the fire; and a head and face, dry and withered like that of a mummy, protruded itself from the folds of the gray *kaross*. "I am here, my son."

"Nay, my father, I called not," said Dingaan. "I did but tell how I brought the white man to thee."

The head disappeared again inside the blanket, and Dingaan continued:

"He is wise in all the learning of our people. A rainmaker's son, and the son's son of a rainmaker who was great in the land of my forefathers, is Njambi. To him there are no secrets. And I knew he had here the stone of the snake."

"The what?" gasped Sandy.

"The stone of the snake. Let but that stone be placed upon the holes made by the fangs of a snake, and straightway the poison is sucked out and the wound is left clean and whole.

"Lifting thee to my shoulders, I ran. We came to this place, and my father, Njambi, fetched the stone.

"My father applied the stone, and I rubbed thee hard from the toes to the wound, and down from thy neck to the wound. Soon the good red blood flowed, and thou wast saved."

"What is all this nonsense, Bobby Burns?" asked Sandy. "Are you trying to work some Zulu hocus pocus on the son of your old master?"

"I but speak the truth," said the Zulu with simple dignity. "Wait!"

Turning to the silent figure by the fire, Dingaan spoke rapidly. The witch-doctor rose, flung his cloak from him, and with surprising agility for one so old and warped, disappeared from the hut.

"No one but him knows where he keeps that stone," said Dingaan, in explanation of his father's sudden departure.

When the old man came crawling back through the low door and stood on his feet again, Sandy saw that he had something in his hand. The crouching old figure passed around the fire to where the young man sat, and held the object near the blaze, where the light would fall on it.

Sandy looked at it with interest. It was an oval-shaped stone, possibly four inches long by three wide and two thick. The upper side, which was slightly convex, seemed to be of volcanic rock, hard and smooth, while the under side was of a porous stone, like pumice, and mottled and veined with strange-looking marks.

Njambi placed the hollowed side of the stone against the two livid marks that still showed on Sandy's leg. It clung fast. The old man removed his fingers—his sunken eyes burned like coals.

The stone loosened, and fell into the old man's waiting hand. He turned the stone hollowed side up and showed it to Sandy. There was a drop of blood on it.

"Thou seest that my son spoke truth," he said gravely. "No trace of the poison now remains." He went outside again with the stone.

"All we have said he has heard," said Dingaan. "He knows all things."

CHAPTER VII

NJAMBI reëntered the hut and wrapped himself once more in his *kaross*. Squatting down on the other side of the fire, he thrust his head forward, and his eyes burned into Sandy's.

"The ear of the White Flower listens, and the eye of the White Flower watches between the trees that grow tall in the jungle. The White Flower waits for the young man who smiled at her from the grass."

As the old man spoke, Sandy felt himself grow cold, then thrill with a strange elation. In his perplexity he turned to Bobby Burns, but the tall Zulu was gazing intently at his father.

"Come!" said the witch-doctor, beckoning to Dingaan, and leading the way through the entrance-hole.

Dingaan stooped, gave a hand to Sandy, and they followed. Outside, Njambi drew the square of his *kaross* about him, uttered a guttural grunt, and started forward.

It was a wonderful night, even for South Africa. So clear it was in the moonlight that even the vague shapes of the mountains in the north seemed aglow. Closer at hand the hills tumbled over each other in ragged piles, their shadows sharply outlined as they climbed gradually to the foot of the higher peaks.

Sandy, with Dingaan close behind him, walked rather uncertainly down a path beaten out between dumps of mimosa and pomegranate bushes in the wake of the cloaked and bent figure of Njambi. The path led down to a stream, hidden by underbrush. Where two great trees towered straight into the sky, the old man paused till Sandy and Dingaan joined him.

The stream was narrow here, not more than four or five feet wide, but deep and smooth. A fallen log spanned it, and Sandy, steadied by Dingaan, crossed over to the other side, and followed Njambi to a great rock that overhung the stream, adding its shadow to that of the trees and bush.

Still holding his cloak about him, Njambi gazed at the heavens. Sandy looked upward too, and saw that the moon was close to a clear, peculiarly bright star. A beam fell through a gap in the thick foliage, and ran wavering along the ground till it fell full on a deep black pool that lay at the base of the rock.

Njambi dropped down beside this pool and took from beneath his *kaross* a number of oddments. Sandy made out a bunch of dried herbs, a wisp of hair, which he guessed was lion's whiskers, a dried mouse, and numerous other things to which he could put no name.

The old man made all these things into a little cylindrical heap. Then from somewhere beneath his *kaross* he produced flint and steel, which he smote together. A shower of yellow sparks followed. They fell on the cylindrical heap, and burst into a tiny flame, which died down instantly, leaving the heap still burning, and sending out a dense, pungent smoke.

Dingaan touched Sandy, and whispered:

"Come, little baas. Breathe the smoke-magic."

SANDY was of the breed that has been investigating things since the days of the great Roman wall. He had heard of the smoke-magic; he would know what it was like. Moving obediently under the push of Bobby Burns' big, gentle hand, he thrust his face over the smoke.

The first breath made him cough violently, but the pressure of Dingaan's hand did not relax, and he drank in another mouthful of the smoke. A curious sense of detachment, as though he floated above the earth, came over him, followed by a feeling of utter helplessness, and he heard the voice of the Zulu witch-doctor say:

"Look into the water, white man!"

He looked. It seemed to him that he lay in the air and looked down into the pool from above. He could see the white stones at the bottom. The bottom of the pool vanished, and he found himself looking into the veldt. Then he seemed to be standing on the veldt, looking up into a great baobab tree. Something moved in the branches of the tree, and the shadows on the grass wavered.

He saw a horse gallop into view. It was the big black horse of the girl of the drift. The girl was swinging her hat in one hand, and seemed to enjoy the swift motion of the horse.

As they came beneath the tree, the horse shied, stepped backward and toward the side of the road. His hind foot went down and into a hole, and the animal rolled over, throwing the girl from him. She sprang up almost at once, went to the plunging horse, and walked all around him. What she saw must have determined her next action, which was to take a little pistol and fire twice into the poor beast's forehead. The horse lay still.

In spite of his feeling of helplessness, Sandy's brain seemed clear. He knew the horse had broken its leg, and that the girl had done the one merciful thing with her pistol.

The picture blurred, as though a water-rat had rippled the pond. When it cleared again, Sandy saw the girl of the drift walking sturdily across the veldt. Then he almost screamed aloud, for behind a huge boulder was the great gray baboon he had seen in the Big Cup. The girl was going straight toward the boulder.

Again the water blurred. When it cleared, he was looking into a deep cleft in the side of a hill, or it might have been a gulch between two hills. The sides were littered with boulders and stunted trees and ragged, half-grown pomegranates and mimosa. Near the mouth was a jagged pillar of stone, blasted by fire or carved by a glacier into the semblance of a naked woman. Far back the *donga* widened into a clearing, lined on the sides with rocks placed in a sort of rough order. The clearing was overhung at the upper end by a thick growth of trees with interlocking branches.

A path opened through the trees, and the clearing began to fill with baboons. Last of all came the great gray baboon he

had seen so close at hand in the lava-cup. And by his side, her head up, her eyes searching the distance, walked the girl of the drift.

Sandy saw this without surprise, as one sees impossible things in a dream. Without surprise, too, he knew that there walked toward him in this vision the girl he loved. It seemed to him he had known always that he loved her.

The monkeys made way for her, and she seated herself with them, as part of the baboon circle. As she sank to the stone which seemed to have been reversed for her as her seat in the circle, her eyes looked directly into his eyes, and in them was a world of longing and appeal.

THEN the picture faded, and Sandy found himself gripping Dingaan's great fingers and staring into the smooth, dark water of the pool. He straightened up.

"Didst thou see?" asked the witch-doctor.

"Aye," said Sandy, in a voice like his father's, "I saw. When do we start for the *donga?*"

"Thou goest then to the White Flower?" said Njambi. "Of all the women of the white men, her only do I love; her only would I serve."

"I go at once," said Sandy, but when he found that he could not rise to his feet without aid from Dingaan, he listened as Njambi spoke.

"Nay, not at once, white man. First thy strength must come. The young maiden is safe. Twice I have seen her in the *donga.* The baboon people treat her with kindness. Wait for thy strength."

Dingaan placed his hands beneath the young man's armpits and drew him to his feet. The weakness that came over him told him afresh that he could not face a march through the jungle and over the hills just yet.

"When?" he jerked out.

"When thou hast slept and eaten again," said Njambi. "Go thou and Dingaan back to the house. I go to make medicine."

An hour or so later the old man wriggled into the hut and busied himself at the fire. Then he came over to where Sandy lay on the heap of skins, clenching and unclenching his fingers in his impatience and anxiety to be off, weak and helpless as he was, into the forest in search of the girl.

Slipping his old hand under the boy's head, Njambi poured down Sandy's throat an evil-tasting concoction that made his lips smart as it touched them. Immediately he felt a warm, pleasant glow within, and found himself dropping down, down, down into bottomless spaces.

This was followed by long hours of dreamless, health-giving sleep.

CHAPTER VII

TWO days after the end of his visit to Majuba Farm, Mortimer Bradley returned. Jameson, who was expecting him, escorted him once more into the big cool room of the books and maps, and offered him a cigar.

"Hae ye got your plans for taking over the Schlatte lands in motion yet, Mr. Bradley?" the farmer asked as he refilled and lighted his long-handled pipe.

"You mean your plans," said the lawyer with a smile. "Yes, Mr. Jameson."

He followed this with a detailed account of what he had been doing, mentioning no names but those of the Schlattes. Big Sandy noted the omission.

"I'm glad ye name me no names," he said with a laugh.

"It will save you embarrassment, I think," the lawyer replied. "The man who will deal with the Schlattes does not know that you have anything at all to do with the matter. He is a very capable man."

"That's settled, then," said Big Sandy. "Let's to luncheon."

When the solicitor was ready to start on his homeward journey, Piet brought the big white horse out for him to mount. Jameson walked to the gate with his guest, and Bradley had one foot in the stirrup when, running like a startled springbok out of the woods toward the gate, came Tamme the Bushman. Dashing past Bradley so suddenly the horse reared with a frightened snort, the black man flung himself at the feet of Jameson.

"Speak!" said his master.

The Bushman, as soon as he had recovered his breath, obeyed, pouring forth a stream of harsh gutturals and raucous clicks. Jameson listened in silence, motionless, save for the tightening grip of his fist on the bowl of the pipe he was smoking.

"It's come," he said to Bradley when the Bushman had finished. "The Mata-

beles are up. I knew that would happen when the Boers began attacking them last year."

Bradley's face went white for a moment.

"That's bad," he said. "Bad enough for those of us whose women and kiddies are away—but much worse for the rest. How many farms with women and children on them in this district, Jameson?"

"Eight or ten at the least," said Jameson.

NO man knew better than the Scotchman what the Matabele uprising would mean to that district. On one side the valley was flanked by the rising hills that led to the mountains in the north. The other side, to the south, was bounded by great desert wastes, and here and there impassable thorn and acacia shrub, allowing no passage for wagons carrying women and children.

All the traffic into and out of the valley went through a narrow pass which entered the valley from the east end, at the mouth of which was Pietsdorp. The upper neck of the valley, the western end, was closed by the Schlatte farm.

And now Tamme had said that the terrible warriors of T'Chninga, Lo Bengula's chief, had entered the valley from the east early that morning, and that Pietsdorp had been burned, the women and children killed, and the Matabeles were on their way up the valley.

"I warned the directors and other officials of the charted Company what would happen if they persisted in their foolish policy toward the natives!" exclaimed Bradley.

"Aye, I know, Mr. Bradley," said the Scotchman. "But recriminations 'll do nae good noo. We must think how best to act, you and I. Of all the places in the valley, Majuba Farm is the most easily defended. I had thoughts o' that when I selected it years ago."

He paused, knocked the ashes from his pipe and dropped it into his pocket.

"I'd suggest that you, Mr. Bradley," he continued, squaring himself solidly, "ride back as fast as you can go, get your people and come back here hotfoot, warning all the people you can as ye go and come, and telling them to come to this farm. I'll send Piet and other servants o' mine to the farms this side, and we'll have a neat little garrison here to meet the great T'Chninga."

Bradley jumped into his saddle and disappeared in a cloud of dust.

Jameson went back into the house, sent Piet and Tamme to call in the laborers on the farm. These, with the Hottentot, he sent out as runners to other farms in the valley, warning the people of the uprising, and urging that all farmers, with their families, come to Majuba Farm as speedily as possible, bringing with them their horses, ammunition and supplies.

When the runners had disappeared on their errand, Jameson turned to the little Bushman squatting at the foot of the veranda steps, and looked at him long and silently.

"Tamme," he said at length, "dost remember the day when thou wast dying by the road outside the breakwater after the jail people had loosed thee?"

"Yesse, baas," grunted the Bushman.

"Dost remember how I found thee and fed thee Bushman rice and good meat?"

"Yesse, my master."

"Wilt thou now do for me a thing that the people of thy father's tribe will speak of when thou art gone? It is a big thing, a thing that will take the heart and liver of a man to do. Art thou the man?"

"Try me, my father."

"Knowest thou the kraal of Njambi?"

A startled look flashed into the eyes of the Bushman, and his black face grayed. Great was the dread the witch-doctor inspired in the minds and hearts of all the blacks of the district, and great was the reputation of his sorceries and magic among them.

"I know the place of the rainmaker, my master."

"Then, wilt thou go to Njambi? Tell him that if Dingaan and the young baas are still at his hut they must be told to come here with all haste. Tell him that he too is welcome at this kraal until such time as the Matabele dogs have gone past and the valley is at peace once more. Give him this."

Jameson handed the black man a package of snuff, at which the Bushman smiled and his eyes lightened. With a gift such as this he felt that he could in safety approach the great Njambi, and he rose and sped lightly away.

With long, swift strides the master of Majuba Farm hurried to the stables, saddled and rode away through the grove of mahobohobo trees back of the farmhouse.

Under the hot rays of the early afternoon sun the place lay bare and deserted now, seemingly untenanted.

CHAPTER VIII

ONCE through the trees, Big Sandy rode swiftly along a rocky path until he came to a height that overlooked the plain for miles in every direction. Unslinging a pair of high-power binoculars, he studied the valley as far as the gap beyond which lay what was left of Pietsdorp. In the blaze of sunlight the ground quivered and pulsed with heat-waves, and the river in the distance was a fiercely glittering thread.

Far down the valley he could see a little group of figures moving along the track that followed the river's windings. The binoculars brought them near enough for him to make out they were mounted, and seemed to be traveling with speed in his direction, for as he looked the figures grew larger.

Off to one side, where the valley widened before narrowing again for Pietsdorp Gap, there was a break in the hills. Jameson knew that through this ran a steep path hardly fit for sheep and goats, but which an active, sure-footed horse could take at need. With another sweep of his glasses around the valley, he put spurs to his mount and started at a lope toward this opening.

In half an hour he reached it, followed it through its windings over places where the horse had to scramble and scratch with its fore-feet to climb, down descents where the mount slid on haunches and tail, to the level floor of the plain outside the valley.

There he paused to breathe his mount for a few moments, and once more the long canter was resumed. At last he climbed a slight rise and once more drew out his glasses.

From this position he could see the site of Pietsdorp twelve miles away. All that was left now of the village was a thin streamer of smoke climbing higher and ever higher into the perfect blue vault overhead.

"Ah," he muttered, "Tamme was right. Pietsdorp is gone."

While he waited, silent, watchful, there was a stir in the bushes that skirted the foot of the hills, and out into the open came a group of savages. They were dressed in the full equipment of the Matabele *impi* when making war. About the head of each man was a frame of silky fur from the little black long-haired monkeys, and around his waist was a belt of white oxtails. A huge oval shield and a long stabbing-spear completed the outfit of the men.

The leader, a gigantic savage, trotted in front of his warriors—the Matabele never walk when hunting man—in full war regalia. About his middle was a leopard-skin belt, and the monkey-hair of the frame about his face had been bleached white. Otherwise, save for a spike that stuck out straight from just under his left knee, he was as naked as his men.

"T'Chninga himself," grunted Jameson, and swung to his horse, now rested and breathed. Picking his way carefully through the trees that had hidden him, he emerged from cover a dozen yards in front of the frightened savages.

"Greetings!" he called out in the tongue of the Matabele. "Greetings, yellow dogs, who howl with the jackal over the dried bones of the village! From whom do you run?"

The big negro, who had started for a second at the unexpected appearance of the white man, began walking forward.

"Stop!"

The Scotchman pointed his heavy naval revolver at T'Chninga's head. The savages, at the one word from the white man, had all halted in their tracks, but a malignant scowl distorted the face inside the frame of white monkey-fur.

"Thou are near enough to me, T'Chninga, the fly-blown," Jameson went on, choosing his words purposely to infuriate the Matabele chief, "T'Chninga whose mother boasted she came of the Bushman stock."

"Thou liest," the chief flung back at Jameson. "Thy tongue was always set to lies."

"Call me not a liar, thou tailless dog with many tailless pups," said Jameson, and though his voice stung, his eyes were quiet, almost speculative, "or thou shalt surely die before those other dogs behind thee can come to thy aid.

"I have come to tell thee, T'Chninga, that thou must pay for the huts thou hast burned, the cattle thou hast stolen, the white men thou has killed and the white women and children thou has murdered or taken off into captivity. Thou shalt pay with thy rotten hide, and thy tribe shall pay, O thou eater of carrion!"

"I an eater of carrion!" stormed T'Chninga. "I? I am a stamper-down of kraals, an eater-up of men for the Black

One of Bulawayo. Lo Bengula hath sent me. Lo Bengula—"

"Peace, chattering monkey, thing with a baboon face!"

The words cut into the savage chant and T'Chninga checked involuntarily. And then the revolver in Jameson's hand spat. There was a howl from the chief, and he began a most undignified dance on the grass, holding on to one naked foot. Once more the revolver spat, and this time one of the men back of the leader dropped with a wild shriek to the ground, his big toe shot off.

Taking advantage of the general confusion, Jameson wheeled his mount and dashed away through the trees. Five minutes of furious riding, and he was beyond their reach. He slowed his horse and rode on more slowly, chuckling.

He knew that now the savages would follow him, which was exactly what he wanted.

"Old T'Chninga will send off runners to sweep Majuba Farm," he said aloud, a habit he had formed in his long years of solitude. "He will leave all the other places alone till he thinks he has settled with me. And I—well, I think I'll be ready for him."

After that he rode in silence. He was thinking of the coming fight, and the preparations he must make, and make swiftly, before the savages got to the women and children he knew were by this time arriving at Majuba Farm.

HE was right. As he climbed the elevation in front of his home and came in sight of the farmyard, he saw that half a dozen wagons had drawn up in the vicinity of the barn, and a score or more of horses were tied to the fence that protected the little garden.

From the veranda came the sound of excited voices of men and women, all talking at once.

"They chatter, chatter, chatter," he growled, "and there is real work to do."

Within five minutes after he reached the farm the work was started. A gang of men with shovels and picks were hustled off to the hill in front of the house to throw up breastworks. Another gang, led by Bradley, who, with his wife and sixteen-year-old son, had arrived only a few minutes before Jameson, took the work of fortifying another hill, and a party of Boer women, aided by boys and girls, were set to work filling heavy canvas bags with sand from the brook bottom. These sandbags were piled up around the lower part of the house, and inside they were piled in heaps between the windows, which were left open so the defenders could shoot through them. Every available barrel, tub and bucket was filled with water.

For hours the work went forward. By nightfall the house was in some condition for defense. Meantime, scouting parties had been sent out to watch for the coming of the savages, and arrangements had been made for cooking over large, well-protected fires in the stableyard.

When the moon rose, the men were still hard at work, but the women and children were sleeping in long rows on the hay in the barn loft.

JAMESON was everywhere. It was like the old days of his youth to him, when he had been a soldier and leader of men. If he had been sure of young Sandy's safety, he would have found something like joy in the situation.

He was anxious about the boy. What had become of him? Dingaan's last report had been that the young baas was getting well, and would soon be able to travel. He must have heard of the uprising. Why hadn't he come home?

It was nearing nine o'clock by Jameson's old-fashioned silver watch when there came a challenge from the breastworks on the hill. This was followed by a hurried colloquy, and a moment later Tamme was ushered through the sentries to the gate and allowed to come up the walk. Jameson waited for him on the veranda.

"Speak!" he said quietly, as the Bushman, palm uplifted, squatted down before him.

"Njambi, the witch-doctor, sends these words to my White Father," the servant began. " 'Let the White Bull be happy. The young White Bull and his black calf have gone on a mission into the hills. It is a good mission and one that will bring happiness and many cattle to the young White Bull. As for the Matabele, let my White Father beware the evening of the second day. Help is coming to T'Chninga. My Snake says be ready for the evening of the second day.'

"Thus spoke Njambi, the witch-doctor," finished Tamme, and was silent.

"Go thou, eat and sleep," said his master.

CHAPTER IX

WHEN young Sandy awoke after his deep sleep following the mixture Njambi had given him to drink, he bounded from his bed of skins and stood blinking at the sunlight which formed a yellow pool just inside the door of the hut. He was wonderfully refreshed, tingling with health and strength.

Beside his bed lay a little heap of his clothes and his favorite rifle. Hurrying outside, he ran to the stream and plunged into the cold running water, then rolled over and over on the grass to dry himself.

He went back into the hut, dressed, and went outside again to await the coming of Njambi and Dingaan.

Presently the old witch-doctor trotted into view, bearing a big bundle of herbs and grasses which he took into the hut and deposited carefully in a corner. A few minutes later came Dingaan, bringing the hind quarter and liver of a water-buck he had killed. The fire was rekindled, and immediate preparations to eat were made.

The sun was an hour or two on the afternoon side of the meridian when Sandy and Dingaan struck off over the veldt that lay back of the trees and shrubbery surrounding Njambi's kraal. Dingaan carried part of the cooked meat, a goatskin waterbottle, and his spear and knobkerrie, while Sandy was loaded with another waterbottle, his rifle and revolver and a belt filled with cartridges.

The search for the White Flower had begun in earnest.

The country through which Sandy and Dingaan traveled was arid desert, the monotony of the surface broken only by great boulders of red sandstone. For hours the two men trudged through this desert, the hot pebbles that littered the ground scorching through Sandy's shoes. It was hard work. In spite of his urge to reach and rescue the girl who was now never for a moment out of his thoughts, by the time the sun had disappeared in a red mass of clouds, he was ready to stop and eat. Not so, Dingaan.

"Yonder, where the trees begin and the water runs, we shall eat and sleep," he said briefly.

On they walked. The heat of the day passed rapidly from the cool of the swift twilight to the chill of a desert night. Great stars burned overhead. At last the character of the country began to change. The sand gave way to grass-lands, the grass to low shrubs, and these in turn to mighty trees. Dingaan, who made his way as confidently as if it had been broad daylight, swung a little to the left, and Sandy caught the purling of a stream.

By the side of the water, as the waning moon rose to sift thin streamers of light through the trees, Dingaan stopped, threw down his load, unwrapped the meat and gave his young master food and drink.

WHEN they had finished their supper, the big Zulu raked together a great heap of leaves and bade Sandy sleep. Warm under the *kaross* with which the Zulu covered him, he slept for three unbroken hours, Dingaan stretched at full length at his feet.

Dawn found them well on their way again, but Sandy's muscles were feeling the strain, weakened as they had been by the snake's poison. But for Dingaan's enormous strength, the white man would have had to abandon the march. But the Zulu was as strong as three ordinary men.

Now he needed all his strength. The path had to be cleared for Sandy's weary feet. Dingaan cleared it. Rocks that obstructed the path he lifted aside. Branches that hung in the way he ripped from the trees, and guarded and guided his young baas as a nurse would a child.

The rougher the country grew, the more intense grew Sandy's fears for the girl he was seeking. His imagination leaped forward, picturing her as he had seen her in the pool image, surrounded by the baboons, the little terrified look of appeal in her eyes. When this vision came before him, he would press forward until even Dingaan would be compelled to break into a lope.

At last, shortly before noon, they climbed, Sandy with bursting lungs, to the lip of the plateau, and saw, reaching high against the skyline, the crest of the mountains.

Around them the ground tumbled in enormous waves, covered with gray boulders among which grew thorn trees and stunted shrubs. In and out of these Dingaan led the way until they came to the mouth of a *donga* leading back into the hills. Here the Zulu stopped and pointed.

Sandy looked. What he saw made his heart skip a beat or two. On the flank of the hill before them, where the stunted

mimosa and pomegranate bushes were not so high as the big gray boulders, moved six or eight monkey figures. Dingaan pulled his master's sleeve.

"Down, baas," he said. "We near the *donga* of the baboon people."

Crouching low, and creeping from rock to rock, almost without a sound, they came to a jagged pillar of stone which at a little distance, looked like a naked figure of a woman. Beyond this was the mouth of another ravine which Sandy immediately recognized as the *donga* he had seen in the pool. Into this they crept to reconnoiter. On one side a narrow cave ran back deep into the earth.

"Thou wilt hide here, baas," whispered the Zulu, "while I see what the baboon people do."

At first Sandy was disposed to object, his deep anxiety making any sort of delay an actual physical punishment to him. He wanted to be in action. But, "Lie down and wait, *baba!*" ordered the Zulu, using the name he had called the baby Sandy; and the young man Sandy obeyed, and stretched himself at length on the fine cool sand at the bottom of the cave.

Making sure that his master was well hidden, Dingaan fell flat on his stomach, and like a monstrous black snake, wriggled away through the thick underbrush that covered the side of the *donga*.

The stillness was intense; and tired to the point of utter exhaustion, Sandy slept. When he opened his eyes, nearly an hour later, Dingaan squatted beside him inside the cave.

"Thou art wise to sleep, little baas," he said with a smile. "Soon thou wilt need all thy strength."

"The maiden, the White Flower!" exclaimed Sandy.

"She waits in a cave beyond the *donga*, where the walls are steep and hard to climb," said the Zulu. "And now that thou art rested, thou shalt see for thyself."

He took a pinch of snuff from the tin box he carried in the slit of his ear, removed from his kit a length of thin, strong rawhide, and leaving all else behind save his spear and knobkerrie, began again his noiseless wriggling through the underbrush. Sandy, carrying rifle, revolver and cartridge-belt, followed, his head, as he crawled on hands and knees, close to Dingaan's heels.

Close to the lip of the *donga* crawled the two men, keeping a sharp lookout for any scattered baboons that might be wandering about the hillside. Deeper and steeper grew the cañon as it ran back into the hills. A hundred paces or so from its mouth its sides became almost perpendicular walls. The bushes and grass that had grown down almost to the bottom of the *donga* nearer the mouth stopped, and the bare rock walls widened into a sort of amphitheater, whose seats were a rough arrangement of vari-sized stones piled around the circle.

Dingaan pointed down into this amphitheater. "The council-hall of the baboon people," he whispered over his shoulder to Sandy.

At the upper end of this thing which Dingaan called the council-hall a great rock jutted out, narrowing the opening that led into the farther reaches of the *donga*. Up to them from somewhere beyond this rock came the indistinct chatter of baboons. Moving a little farther back from the edge of the wall, and taking infinite care not to make a noise, the two men rounded this point and brought up at the foot of a great baobab tree about fifty yards farther on.

The trunk of this monster of the stunted forest leaned slightly over the edge of the wall, and one huge branch dipped down until it came within fifteen or twenty feet of the floor of the *donga*. Looking back down the wall, between the tree and the jutting rock, Sandy saw the mouth of a cavern, and before it, seated on a rock, her nimble fingers braiding her long hair, was the girl of the drift!

ALTHOUGH none of the baboons could be seen by Sandy and Dingaan where they crouched at the tree, the chatter inside the cavern made it very evident that the girl was under guard. So silent had been the approach of the men that their presence had not yet been discovered. The chatter of the monkeys kept on. Wearily, hopelessly, the girl on the rock continued the futile braiding and unbraiding of her hair.

With his rawhide *rimpi* in hand, Dingaan began climbing the baobab tree, and the girl turned her head. As she did so, Sandy rose slightly and waved the hand that held his rifle. With a little stifled cry the girl started toward the tree.

Instantly from out of the cavern came three big baboons.

"Shoot, baas!" called Dingaan, making fast to the dipping limb of the tree the tough length of *rimpi.*

With that there was a shuffling of many feet, and the *donga* swarmed with baboons. Sandy, his hand steady, his eyes blazing, spoke softly to the girl.

"Keep along the wall and out of the line of fire."

She heard and obeyed. The rifle leaped to Sandy's shoulder, and an old baboon sprang into the air with a terrifying shriek, and, falling, rolled over and over and lay still. Again Sandy fired, and another of the monkey tribe lay still. Again and again the rifle spurted, and each time one of the creatures died, or ran howling and limping down the *donga.*

Somehow the girl got to the dangling *rimpi.* Sandy, hastily reloading his rifle, saw her slip the noose over her shoulders and under her arms.

Before Dingaan could move a muscle, with a single lightning movement, a great gray baboon that had just bounded into view leaped forward, seized the rope with one long, hairy hand and the girl's throat with the other, choking off her scream of terror. It was the old gray baboon of the volcanic cup.

Sandy turned sick with horror. For the moment the steadiness of his hand was gone, and the shot he aimed at the monster's head went wild.

"Ah, baas!"

Dingaan's voice held a world of reproach, of understanding, of nerve-steadying encouragement. Locking his long legs about the limb to which he had fastened the *rimpi,* the Zulu reached far down, and seizing the rawhide rope in a mighty grasp began lifting. Girl and monkey, whirling round and round like a cockchafer on the end of a pin, rose slowly in the air as Dingaan's great hands brought up the rope.

With the cessation of the firing, the uninjured baboons at once came running back and crowded closer and closer under the tree. If Dingaan's muscles should fail him, or the *rimpi* should break! The world around Sandy swam for a second, and turned black, as this thought flashed through his brain.

Then he began firing again. When the smoke from the five quick rifle-shots had cleared, three more baboons lay dead on the ground, and save for the huge beast at the end of the rope, not a living monkey could be seen or heard in the *donga.*

By this time the great weight at the end of the *rimpi* had stopped spinning, but the grip of the terrible fingers at the girl's throat had almost done their work.

Sandy, his rifle charged once more, saw his chance. Drawing a fine sight on the head of the baboon, he fired. The huge body, arms and legs outspread, pitched downward and sprawled on the rocks at the bottom of the *donga;* and Dingaan drew the girl up and over the limb to safety.

Breathing heavily from his almost superhuman exertions, Dingaan cut the rope at the limb, and with the girl in his arms, worked his way backward to the bole of the tree. There he turned, and slowly paying out the *rimpi,* lowered the limp body into Sandy's eagerly waiting arms.

No stir of life came from the girl. Ugly red bruises showed on the soft throat, and on the smooth white shoulders where the dress had been torn away. In an agony of apprehension Sandy held her close to him and felt the faint throbbing of her heart.

"She is alive!" he breathed, looking at Dingaan.

And then, knowing they had no time to lose, the big Zulu gathered the girl in his arms and began gliding swiftly through the wood in the direction of the veldt. Sandy, his rifle loaded and ready, followed.

CHAPTER X

WHITE man and black knew they had not done with the baboons when they got the girl out of the *donga.* Whether it was the same beasts in pursuit, or whether more baboons had been attracted from the forest, Sandy had no means of knowing. What he did know was that before Dingaan, the still unconscious girl in his arms, had reached the fringe of the woods, the big man-shaped beasts were coming after them in long, hideous leaps and bounds.

At first he did not fire. He wanted to conserve the rest of his ammunition as long as possible, and he held the baboons off for a time by making threatening gestures.

Halfway down the hillside from the forest's edge was an irregular row of rocks that looked not unlike a rough stone fence on some forgotten farm. Sandy called out to Dingaan to take refuge behind these

rocks. Increasing his speed, the big Zulu ran that way.

Almost before he knew it, the baboons were upon Sandy, and one of the biggest stretched forth a hairy arm to snatch away the rifle. Sandy pulled the trigger, and the steel-jacketed bullet carried off the top of the beast's head.

The explosion, and its effect upon their mate, stopped the advance of the monkeys for a moment, giving Sandy time to break away from them.

"Near thing that time!" he panted as he joined Dingaan at the wall behind which the girl lay, out of sight of the baboons. "That devil almost had me."

The baboons had gathered about their dead leader.

"Shoot now, little baas," said Dingaan. "The baboon people don't mourn long."

Taking care to pick his beast with each shot, Sandy emptied his magazine into the crowd up the hill.

With the first report, and the accompanying howl from the animal struck by the bullet, the screaming and wailing were redoubled, but before the last bullet went into the back of a retreating baboon, all that were living had reached the shelter of the trees.

"Take the maiden," said Sandy, "and hasten."

As Dingaan sprang over the wall to obey, he gave a startled exclamation. The girl was sitting erect, staring about her, a look of perplexity in her dark eyes.

"Welcome, little White Flower," said the Zulu, as though she had returned from a journey. "Welcome!"

"Welcome, Dingaan," she replied doubtfully. And then, as Sandy fired at a baboon who had showed himself among the trees, she asked: "What is the shooting? Have the Matabele attacked us?"

SANDY overheard this. Not daring to leave his post with the baboons on watch from the forest, he leaned over the wall and said:

"Not the Matabele, mademoiselle. Baboons."

Her face blanched with terror, and she scrambled to her feet.

"Don't worry," said Sandy, as he would have spoken to a frightened child. "I believe we have them on the run. You and Dingaan had better start for home now as fast as you can go. I'll stay here for a time and hold the monkeys back."

As he went on speaking, the fear died out of the girl's eyes and she looked bravely into his. Slowly there rose from her smooth white throat, where the bruises now showed purple, a vivid red that mounted to her very brow.

"Almée!" whispered Sandy, all unconscious of the towering form of Dingaan, of the nearness of the baboons, of the fact that this girl was the daughter of his father's lifelong enemies, who had, he believed, lain in wait to murder him—of everything else but that she was Almée, the Girl of the Drift, the girl of all the world that was his own girl.

She made no answer, but stood and stared deep into his eyes, questioning them.

"Quick, the rifle, baas! The baboons come again!" called Dingaan, whose eyes had not once left the forest.

Sandy turned, jerked the rifle to his shoulder and fired into a group of monkeys that had ventured to the edge of the woods. As he pulled the trigger, he felt a swift, caressing touch brush his cheek, but when he glanced backward, over his shoulder, the girl and the Zulu were hurrying away.

Watching them out of the corner of his eye, Sandy seated himself on the rocks and began counting the cartridges he had left in belt and bandolier. The belt had held ninety rounds when he started, and the bandolier an additional sixty. He had used thirty shots.

For half an hour he sat there, picking off the baboons as they showed themselves at the forest edge. Confident, then, that the girl and Dingaan had got a start that would insure their safety, he fired a shot or two into the woods, reloaded his rifle, and started swiftly on their spoor.

His blood leaped within him as he ran. All sense of fatigue had left him. He felt as he had used to feel when he was the swiftest runner on the hare-and-hounds team at school. As he ran, the song in his heart grew louder until all the world seemed singing. He had seen this girl Almée in the flesh only once before today. Yet, without thought of her, all thought was impossible, so completely did she fill his horizon.

He reached the plain, and taking the general direction of the spoor he had been following, saw in the distance ahead the two figures he sought, now no longer running. As the sun sank back of the mountains at the west, leaving the air still and cool, he overtook them.

And there, beside a small, clear stream, they all paused to rest, and when they went on again, Almée's slim hand rested confidently in Sandy's broad palm.

CHAPTER XI

SUNRISE saw big Sandy Jameson still on his feet. He had worked through the night to fortify Majuba Farm and prepare it for the attack he was sure would not be delayed far into the day. Until the scouts came in with their report of the coming of the Matabeles he did not propose to relax his exertions or his watchfulness.

The house stood on a slight rise of ground partly encircled by a shallow, swift-running stream known to the Jamesons as "the Creek," having been so called in Young Sandy's boyhood, and to his amusement, by an American missionary. On the far side of this water the hill rose again, and then the ground began dropping away to the river bottoms, which made up so much of the richness of Majuba Farm.

In fortifying the house Jameson had caused the men to dig a set of trenches on the rise across the stream to guard the approach by the road. The roofs of both house and barn he had had covered with bags of sand, and with a thick padding of earth. The entrance to the cattle-kraal he had blocked with thorn-bushes, beyond which he had built a rampart of rock and earth, leaving only room enough for one man to enter or leave at a time.

In addition to all this he had thrown up, at various points from which an approach might be made, small earthworks capable of holding three of four men, who, armed with rifles, could hold off attacks by the savages. Two rows of sand-filled bags formed a protected passage from house to barn, and a similar row from the barn to the stone-walled cattle-kraal. With forty or fifty trained marksmen, armed with repeating rifles and plenty of ammunition, stationed behind these defenses, Majuba Farm formed as tough a nut as any battalion of regular infantry might care to crack.

And yet, though he had done all in his power, and was satisfied with what he had accomplished, Big Sandy was uneasy in his mind. His boy's continued absence troubled him. He could see nothing in the flowery imagery of the old witch-doctor's message save that Young Sandy and the Zulu were no longer at Njambi's hut.

TOWARD the middle of the morning he rode to the outposts he had stationed at vantage points in the valley. An old Boer, who had been a *voortrekker,* and whose father had been in the Great Trek, went with him. This man had French Huguenot blood in his veins, and bore the sign of it in his name—Raoul Briou. His sister had married Christian Schlatte. However, although Briou was connected by marriage with a member of the Schlatte family, he and Jameson had always been on friendly terms, being each other's nearest neighbors.

Briou's wife and children had been among the first to arrive at Majuba Farm. Briou himself had just joined the garrison, having returned only that morning from a long and fruitless search for his niece Almée Schlatte.

"Oom Piet and Christian have little hope now that they will ever see the girl again," he said, finishing, in the Cape Dutch which Big Sandy hated but perfectly understood, a statement he had undertaken in English. "We found the horse she had been riding, or all the *assvogels* had left of him, on a byroad down the river about five miles from the drift. The horse's leg had been broken by a fall in a gopher hole, and he had a bullet-hole in his head."

"Yes?" said Jameson noncommittally.

Seeing that his companion would add nothing to the conversation, and knowing the deep enmity that existed between the Schlattes and Jameson, Briou also fell silent. Neither of the men spoke again until the last of the outposts had been visited without sight or sound of the Matabeles.

"The attack will not come before nightfall," said the *voortrekker.*

"You may be right about that," agreed Big Sandy. "We might as well get what rest we can before they come."

They rode in silence back to the farm, and Big Sandy gave the order for the men to relax, rest and make ready for a hard night.

As it grew dark, there came a rider from one of the outposts with word that flashes of light had been seen at sunset on two long columns of spearheads advancing from the direction of what had been Pietsdorp. This meant the savages would have to go through a narrow pass before they came out on the plain that rose to meet the crest in front of the farmhouse.

Taking with him five of the best shots in the garrison, Big Sandy started on a furious gallop toward this pass.

He found the two columns converging about half a mile away, their advance scouts just entering the far side of the pass. Sandy hid himself and the others until the scouts of the enemy had passed. And then, in the fast-failing light, his men opened fire on the black mass moving toward them three hundred yards away.

Watching, Jameson could see the mass turn and twist and steady itself as the bullets thudded against the broad shields. As the fire grew hotter, and the shots more accurate, the leaders of the two Matabele columns ran together. Two horns shot out, one from either side of the front, and began an encircling movement.

Jameson gave the signal for the firing to cease. Before the advance guard of the Matabele, which had turned back at the first sound of battle, could reach them, the white men had mounted their horses and scattered in flight through the underbrush, headed for the open plain.

There for a time they were targets for the ancient muskets with which the savages in the advance guard were armed. Soon, however, the speed of their mounts bore them beyond the range of these antique weapons.

It was a bold trick, skillfully worked, and it won for him and his men the respite Big Sandy had counted upon.

All night the whites stood on guard at the fortified farm without having to fire a shot. This gave Jameson time to put into effect various refinements in his plans for defense.

Just at sunrise the next morning, in a little tongue of trees and brush that ran like a wedge pointing toward the farmhouse, a body of Matabeles moved into sight. So quietly had they moved, in the half light, they were not more than a hundred and seventy-five yards from the breastworks on the ridge across the brook when they were first seen.

AND then the fight was on. Old T'Chninga had waited long, but when the attack did come, it was delivered with a concentrated fury and precision any West Pointer or Sandhurst man might have envied.

Every one of Jameson's men was in his place. Not only were all the breastworks manned, but the loopholes in the house and barn; and in many cases they were womaned as well, for the Boer women understand fully the care and loading of rifles, and now stood ready to hand their men loaded guns when the emptied ones were handed back to them for reloading. From his vantage-point Big Sandy made out that T'Chninga had taken advantage of every particle of cover available. In places the Matabeles had crept to within a hundred yards of the house.

The hooting of an owl—a most uncanny sound in broad daylight—gave the signal the warriors had waited for.

A cloud of Matabeles emerged from the wedge-shaped tongue of trees on the rise and dashed over the grass toward the house, to be met with a roar of fire from the trenches. Not one of the rushing savages covered the distance between the woods and breastworks. When they fell back, the ground was littered with their dead.

Meanwhile the approach to the cattle-kraal, which was easy, was rushed, and the Boers guarding it were forced to drop their rifles, or turn them into clubs and beat back the savages in hand-to-hand fighting.

For a time it looked as though T'Chninga would win out there, but finally, with a long, slow surge, the white men drove out the invaders and the kraal was cleared.

The black chief led the assault on the barn in person. His quick eye, the eye of the born general, had seized upon it as the weak point of the position. His men advanced to within twenty or thirty yards of the rear, and then dashed forward, carrying the section of a bole of a big tree as a battering ram.

Full against the barn door they smashed with this, sending the door flying from its hinges. Big Sandy had foreseen this possibility. Back of the door were heaped up sandbags from behind which the defenders poured a blasting fire directly into the faces of T'Chninga and his men.

The Matabeles fled like frightened blackbirds from the range of those deadly rifles. With that, the attack crumpled. Back dropped the surging blacks, from the barn, from the house, from every point—back and back across the stream, up and over the rise and out of sight. The din of their yelling, the fierce clatter of the rifle-fire, the roar of the old firearms carried by the savages, died down as suddenly as it had started. In all, the attack had lasted only a few minutes. But in front

of the house, the barn and the kraal, and before the breastworks on the rise, lay dead Matabeles in tumbled, tangled heaps.

It was a gruesome sight, and one that Jameson did not look at long, nor with any satisfaction.

"Poor devils!" he said to Bradley. "But they would have it, they would have it."

CHAPTER XII

FOR hours after the savages had bolted for cover, Jameson and his garrison at Majuba Farm kept watch, dropping an occasional shot into thickets where it seemed likely the Matabeles might be hiding. Late in the afternoon he sent out Tamme and Piet to see if they could find any trace of T'Chninga and his men.

Long before that time the last of the wounded white men had been cared for, as well as the six wounded Matabeles that had been left behind by the savages, and the dead had all been carted away.

Not one of Jameson's men had been seriously hurt. Two or three in the cattle-kraal, where the fighting had been hand to hand, had suffered more or less painful stabs and slashes from the assegais wielded by the attacking force, and a few men from the breastworks on the rise had been grazed by bullets, but there was nothing the two doctors on the ground could not handle, helped out by the women.

At dusk the farmyard and ground were clean again, and the women of the garrison were laughing as they prepared the evening meal.

All through the long hours of watching and waiting, even through the thickest of the fight, Jameson had been thinking of young Sandy, and worrying. Where was the boy, his lad? And where was Dingaan?

But he kept his worries to himself. Not even to Bradley, or to his old friend McPherson, did Big Sandy hint of the concern that harassed him.

It was past nine o'clock when he heard a sentry challenge. In a few moments Piet came limping in with a thorn in his foot, and a tale of having followed the spoor of the retreating Matabele forces. They had contented themselves, he reported, with stealing all the cattle they could find, including some of the best of Jameson's imported stock he was relying upon to improve his breeds.

Tamme, the Bushman, came in a little later. He had gone several miles, and cast several large circles without finding a trace of the Matabeles.

Jameson let it go at that. He was thoroughly worn out with the strain of the last few days, and the hard work of the last forty-eight hours, and went to bed, leaving orders to be called if anyone came. He slept the sleep of exhaustion, but he was troubled by dreams in which he kept seeing young Sandy in the grip of T'Chninga, or lying under a lion's paw, or, and that was the most vivid of all, being swept down the torrent of a river that looked exactly like the Thames at Putney. But he slept till broad daylight.

Soon after breakfast scouts returning brought the information that the valley for miles around was clear of the savages. With that, the Boers and British settlers began inspanning for their journey back to their homes.

The farm buzzed like a beehive. Two or three hundred men, women and children gathered in and about the house, laughing, talking, shouting orders and saying their good-by's and their thanks to Big Sandy, who smoked in silence and looked indifferent, but was really horribly embarrassed.

INTO the midst of all this pleasant stir and buzz rushed one of the two lookouts that Jameson still had stationed on the ridge, calling out that a native was coming up the rise on the other side.

"He's a Mushukulumbwe," (one of the Naked People) "and he runs as if he was fagged out," the sentry continued when he had come near enough to make himself better understood.

"That will be one of the Schlatte Farm men," commented Raoul Briou in a low tone which only the solicitor, Bradley, heard.

"Mount a horse, one of you men," ordered Jameson, "and meet that man. He may have news."

Briou sprang to his horse and was off before any one of the others who would have liked to go could get his foot in the stirrup.

Big Sandy was thinking that at last some one might be bringing him news of his son. Eagerly he watched Briou canter off and up the rise. Now he could see the runner, coming along the top of the hill. The man would run a few yards, stop and walk, then pick up his jogtrot once more.

Briou reached the top of the rise and stopped his horse beside the runner. Sandy saw the black gesticulating with arms and hands. Then the rider wheeled and started back toward the farm at a furious gallop.

At the gate he pulled the horse up with a jerk, and shouted out in nervous English:

"The devils are after the Schlattes. T'Chninga has their farm surrounded. The runner says he just managed to crawl through their lines before they were shut tight."

Hurriedly he repeated, in Cape Dutch, what he had said in English, then drew himself up rather stiffly, and waited.

Once more the babble of voices that had been hushed while Briou was speaking burst forth once more, now in great excitement. Men ran hurriedly for their rifles and horses. Children that had been put into the wagons were hurried out again, and sent into the farmhouse or back to the barn for safety. Women hastened to assist their men in getting ready for the march, which everyone expected would start at once. Less than ten minutes after Briou had given out his news, a raggedly formed but formidable-looking column of forty or fifty men had drawn up outside the gate, waiting for Jameson.

Everyone had taken it as a matter of course that the master of Majuba Farm was to lead them. But he made no move. Moodily he stood on the steps of his veranda, saying nothing as he watched the swirl of preparations.

"Ready, Big Sandy!" yelled Bradley, perched high on his white gelding.

"Go without me," growled the Scotchman. "I owe the Schlattes nothing."

He bit the last words off short, went inside the house and shut the door.

For an instant there was stark stillness in the crowd. Men and women stared at each other amazed. That Jameson and the Schlatte family did not "hit it off very well" every one of them had known. But that Jameson, that any white man strong enough to ride, would refuse to go to the aid of a neighbor faced with such peril as lay before the Schlattes now was beyond their understanding.

"A touch o' sun," grunted McPherson to Bradley.

"A touch of primordial hate," said the solicitor, and his face was set.

For a time the command milled aimlessly about, and then an Irishwoman spoke.

"Go on with the lot of you, or we women will go and fight for the Schlattes and leave ye men here to look after the babies!"

THEY started then, under the guidance of Bradley. As they rode off, Big Sandy came out on the veranda once more, his porcelain pipe clenched in his teeth, his eyes burning with a somber gleam. The Irishwoman gave him one swift look, hurriedly crossed herself, and followed the other women and children back to the barn. For a while he stood there, a grim, lonely figure, facing the mountains, staring fixedly at them, as though seeking inspiration. But the mountains told him nothing. Silent, almost repelling, they lay shimmering in the sun, the cloud-shadows racing over their flanks, their heads dumbly uplifted to the blue heavens.

He went indoors again, and stood for a moment in the hall, not knowing what he had meant to do. Then he climbed the steep stairs to the attic room that was his son's. From the low doorway his eye ran tenderly over the little room, seeing anew the things that had been there since Sandy was a baby, and the few things he had brought back with him from school. Everything spoke to him of his boy—and the Schlattes had taken him away!

"Damn them!" he muttered, shaking his big fist in the direction of the Schlatte farm. "Damn them all!"

His face was hard as flint as he descended to the second floor and entered his own room, the room his wife had shared with him.

The white curtains at the windows swayed and fluttered in the breeze. What a joke those white curtains had been there in the wilderness when his wife first put them up! All the Boer settlers then in the valley had ridden by to have a look at them. Beside the home-made bed, with its red counterpane was the table, one of the first things he had made with his own hands. She had sat beside him under the baboba tree as he worked, and they'd laughed together at the funny little table when it was finished.

He went over to the table and picked up a book, an old-fashioned, leather-bound volume of verses he had bought from a

Dutch trader who could not read. Sandy's wife had loved this book, and for a while it was their only library.

He fondled the book in his hands. It seemed to bring his wife nearer to him once more. He could see her eyes, her wonderful gray-blue eyes! How they got to a man! How sweet she had always been!

Down went the book with a slap on the table, and down the stairs went Big Sandy almost at a run. In a moment he was inside the horse-kraal, feverishly throwing on the rawboned mare he called Kate the first saddle he could lay his hands on. Slinging his bandolier over his shoulder, he mounted, and rifle in hand, was galloping through the gate on the spoor of the command under Bradley before the women and children in and around the big barn had time to finish their gasp of surprise.

Big Sandy had won his big fight.

CHAPTER XIII

OVER the rise galloped the mare, and then, striking the long, powerful stride that had made her famous throughout the valley, she began thundering down the incline on the other side.

The ground, burned brick-hard by the long drought, echoed to the pounding of her hoofs as she ran. Low bushes swept by; the river came into sight; and Big Sandy saw the spoor he was following swerve to the right and move northward.

A little smile lit up his eyes, though his mouth remained firm. Ignoring the spoor, he rode straight ahead.

He reasoned that Bradley, not knowing the country as well as he did, would follow the more obvious route to the Schlatte farm, a road that ran along the river windings. He would take the shortcut that led straight on and lop off three miles, at least.

This shortcut, which was only a bridle-path, passed a flat-topped hill, or *kopje*. He was half minded to climb this *kopje* and search the country with his binoculars. Sandy might be somewhere out there; besides, he might catch sight of the Matabele, and locate Bradley. But time was too precious. He must make up the hour he had wasted.

Kate settled into her stride again, and the *kopje* was left behind.

And now the country began to change. In the neighborhood of Majuba Farm was rolling grass-country. Here the soil was a dull red, and where the *kopjes* reared themselves toward the sun there were great gulches, or *dongas,* and the machabel and umsassa trees gave place to patches of thorn and scrub.

After three-quarters of an hour's riding through this, Jameson came to a passage between two craggy, timber-covered *kopjes.* The passage was very narrow at the mouth, but led into a bowl-shaped little valley, surrounded by high rocky boulders and overgrown by waist-high grass. In the center was a pond of good water. Here he stopped, and allowed Kate to drink.

On the far side of this valley he came upon the road the command under Bradley would have to follow. A moment's observation showed him that he was ahead of them.

Dismounting, he gathered grass and gave his mount a good, vigorous rubbing, and then walked her up and down beneath the trees to cool her off. Except for his worry about young Sandy, he felt curiously at peace with himself and the world.

The advance party of the command came into sight and greeted him with a shout of delight and surprise. They were all clustered around him talking, when the main body appeared, and Bradley immediately demanded that he take command of the force.

They were now about halfway between the two farmhouses, and over the worst of the road. Big Sandy, having taken command, ordered the men to dismount and rest their horses, for he counted upon having the mounts as fresh as possible when they struck the Matabeles. During the wait he sent out scouts on foot, and climbed the hill to the right himself and scoured with his glasses the surrounding country, but neither he nor his scouts saw any sign of the enemy.

THE command resumed the march at a brisk trot. Two hours of this, with ten minutes' rest at the end of each hour, and they came to a low-lying ring of hills encircling a valley, one end of which rested on the river-bank. The other end ran far back into the hills.

In this valley, dazzlingly white in the sheen of the sun, unshaded by tree or vine, stood the Schlatte farmhouse. Not

even with his glasses to aid could Big Sandy see any sign of life about it.

Off to the right, and some distance from the farmhouse, some mahobohobo trees made, with their broad leaves, a dark green spot on the horizon. As Jameson turned his glasses in that direction, a little puff of black burst from the trees and went careering across the open toward the farmhouse. About halfway he saw it falter, break into many little parts, and rush back to the shelter of the mahobohobos.

So tiny were the figures, dwarfed as they were by distance, and so quick their movement, that they were hidden again by the trees before the white man more than realized he had just witnessed the repulse of a Matabele attack on the farmhouse.

From the hilltop Big Sandy could see, still farther to the right, the mouth of a *donga,* and leading off from the *donga* in his direction a strip of timber, dark to the ground with undergrowth. By following behind these, he could lead his men to within half a mile of the farmhouse, which would put him about the same distance from T'Chninga's forces, which he now knew had drawn up behind rocks and boulders amid and back of the mahobohobo trees.

He gave the command, and the horsemen rattled down into the *donga,* where the men dismounted and led their horses.

After what seemed a lifetime they came to the beginning of the half-mile or so of open ground between them and the enemy. So intent had the Matabeles been on their attack on the Schlattes, so confident that all the other *makewas* were still cooped up at Majuba Farm and would not dare to stir, that they had not even taken the trouble to post flankers. Consequently they were totally unprotected from behind.

TAKING in the situation from his new point of vantage, Jameson called Bradley to him and pointed to a tiny *kopje* that jutted up some six hundred yards from the right flank of the Matabele forces.

"Take ten men, Boers preferably, and crowd out to that hill," he directed. "Better have your men carry Mausers—and plenty of ammunition. I want them to make a diversion, and the more deadly their fire, the better the effect will be. Start firing as soon as you get in position. As soon as you get going strong, I shall charge. Watch us, and when we get started, you come back here, get your horses, and join us. And," he added, as Bradley turned, "don't forget to yell like all hell when you start to shoot."

He rolled over on his stomach again, while Bradley and his men crawled away, to stare once more at the white farmhouse in the valley. For fifteen years he had been living a neighbor to these Schlattes. Today was the first time he had ever seen their home.

Out from the copse again crept the Matabeles for another attack on the farmhouse, only to break and run for cover under the Schlattes' deadly fire.

Big Sandy's attention turned from the farmhouse to concentrate on the little snakelike column of men under Bradley, worming its way from rock to rock and from brush to brush to the *kopje.*

No sign had come from the Matabeles that they suspected the arrival of reënforcements for their foes in the farmhouse. The last man of Bradley's column wriggled into position and disappeared behind the *kopje,* ready to begin firing, and Big Sandy raised his hand for the rest of his command to mount. Silently the horses were led into line, and without a sound, the men stood ready to mount with the sound of the first volley from the *kopje.*

It came, ragged and scattered, but thrilling, and they leaped to their saddles. Another volley sounded as they emerged from the shelter of the trees and formed the charge. The wild, concerted yell that accompanied each volley of shots fired showed Jameson that Bradley had forgotten no part of his orders.

Frightened out of control, T'Chninga's men broke from cover and started dashing across the open between them and the farmhouse. The unexpected flank-attack had broken their nerve. They were running. And after them went Jameson and his thirty-five horsemen.

The rifles on the hills ceased speaking. The revolvers of the riders took up the tale, and the Mausers of the Schlattes in the farmhouse talked also, talked much and well.

Jameson could see T'Chninga storming and struggling with his men, trying to get them to turn and face the charge. But the chief's efforts were wasted. The spirit of the Matabele *impi* was broken. They continued to run, throwing away their

shields and spears as they ran, and even dropping their far more precious muskets.

SUDDENLY the big savage ceased to importune and berate his men, and turned his back on them. Lightly as an eland runs, he came springing toward the enemy horsemen. A dozen men shot at him, but he kept straight on till he stood before Big Sandy. The Scotchman, who feared nothing, instinctively swerved from the blaze of rage and disappointed hate that glared from the bloodshot eyes of the savage.

"Thou canst not run and live this time, white man," he thundered in his own tongue, and hurled his stabbing spear straight at Jameson's breast.

The thing flew true, but Kate at that moment swerved mightily, her foot in a gopher-hole, and rolled head over, carrying her rider down.

That was the last thing Big Sandy remembered of the famous fight and relief of the Schlatte kraal.

When he opened his eyes an hour later he was lying in a bed in a darkened room. He struggled to sit up and found that his right arm was bandaged and strapped to his breast. Another bandage covered the top of his head.

Then he remembered his fall, reflected that it must have been a nasty one, and realized that he must now be in the front room of the Schlatte farmhouse.

This was not one of the things he had bargained for. Helping the Schlattes in the face of a common foe was one thing; being himself the recipient of kindness and attention from them, and in their own house, was quite another. He sat up, and his heavily booted feet hit the floor.

A chair scraped violently in the adjoining room.

"Dad!" a clear voice sang out, to break and gulp. *"Dad!"*

Big Sandy took a step forward, and stood staring at his son, unable to move another muscle.

Forgetting his newly acquired manhood, Young Sandy rushed like an impetuous child to his father, threw his arms around the bearded man's neck and hugged him. And the bearded man only blinked.

Came light, rapid footfalls. The door swung open, and Almée stepped shyly into the room.

Young Sandy moved toward her and took her hand.

"Father," he said, simply, standing very straight and proud, "this is Almée."

"Oh, aye," grunted Big Sandy. "I ken that." But he did not look at the girl.

"And," went on the son, beginning to flounder a little, "she—I—we—that is—You see, Father, I found Almée in the cave of the baboons—"

"The what?" burst out his father.

"Oh, don't you know? Haven't you heard anything?"

TURNING from Almée, he took his father's uninjured hand and gently forced him to lie down again. Seated on the bed beside the older man, Young Sandy hurriedly told his story.

"And," he concluded, "after we drove off the baboons, Dingaan and I brought Almée home to her father. It took us nearly all night to get here. That was two nights ago. I wanted to start at once for Majuba Farm, but Almée and her people insisted that I have something to eat first, and I was hungry."

He said the last with a note of apology, and went on with his explanation:

"While we were at breakfast, one of Oom Piet's men came in with word that the Matabeles were on their way here. It was then I heard for the first time of the uprising, and that you had been expecting an attack. Without stopping to finish my breakfast, I called Dingaan and we set out, hot-foot, for Majuba Farm. The Matabele met us and drove us back. Since then we've been close prisoners, with everyone else in the farmhouse, till your men came this afternoon."

Almée, who had been moving softly about the room, ostensibly setting things to rights, but losing no word of Sandy's, now came to the foot of the bed, flushed and eager.

"And your men are so brave," she said in her queer little half-French accent, "so wonderful! The Matabele are gone, and no one is seriously hurt—I mean, no one of your men nor of my father's house."

While she was speaking, there sounded in the adjoining room a slow, ponderous footfall. The door swung back once more, and Oom Piet Schlatte stood there. About his forehead was a bandage where a Matabele bullet had cut a furrow. His white hair and beard gleamed silvery in the half light, and he bowed deeply to his guests.

"Mr. Jameson," he said, speaking with a curiously exact English he had learned

from books, "you are welcome to this house. The Lord in His wisdom selected you to be the instrument whereby I and all of mine should be saved from the enemy. What would have happened if you had not come when you did, I do not like to think."

"The water in the house was all gone," put in Almée.

"That is right." The grandfather nodded his big head. "Also, the cartridges. We had not a round of ammunition left when the firing was over."

"I thought you might be running short," said Jameson.

"Years ago, Oom Sandy," went on the old Boer, "you and I struggled against each other. I see now that my sons and I wronged you. You took your revenge."

"Aye," said Big Sandy, "I did."

"That first wrong, which was mine, begot other wrongs on both sides," the minister continued. "Whatever misfortune came to me and mine afterward we thought started at your hands, and always we retaliated. The daughter of our house is lost, and we snatch away your son. Forgetting all that, you come to us in the hour of our dire extremity."

He stopped, apparently at a loss for further words.

"He wants to ask you to be friends," said Almée softly.

"Will you, Father?" begged Young Sandy. "Will you?"

But the father's face was like rock in its sternness. Only the howling of hyenas in the gathering dusk outside could be heard in the silence that followed Young Sandy's pleading.

At last Jameson spoke, addressing Oom Piet.

"When you followed me out of Natal to this land, I resolved that sooner or later I would break you and drive you from the veldt. If you had left me undisturbed, I might have spared you. But you did not."

The Scotchman swung himself off the bed and walked over to the window.

"And I have not spared you, Oom Piet," he went on. "The day after you came trespassing on my grounds and took away my son by force,—after having tried to shoot him from ambush,—I set in motion the machinery for breaking you."

Oom Piet had listened unmoved until Big Sandy spoke of ambush. Then he started violently, and his blue eyes shot fire.

"What do you mean by saying that we shot at your son from ambush?" he shouted, his old voice high and piping.

"Aye," said Big Sandy, calm as the other's anger flared up. "I knew, and so did my son, 'twas your and your skulking breed who fired on him from the high grass beyond the drift the day he came from England."

OOM PIET advanced toward the speaker with a threatening gesture.

"Me!" he screamed. "Me, my sons, ambush a white man! What a—"

Again Almée interrupted. With Jameson's accusation, she too had flung up her head in anger, but a swift glance at Young Sandy had made her wonder. Then she knew. The man she loved believed, had believed all along, that her people were guilty of that ambush. She sprang forward and stopped her grandfather's tirade in mid-sentence.

"Wait, Grandfather!" she cried in Dutch. "He does not understand." Then she turned to Big Sandy, and said proudly:

"It was not my people who fired upon your son from ambush. It was the Matabele. I saw them from the big *kopje* as I rode toward the river, and knew them for a killing party by their spotted shields. They lay hid in the tall grass. Then I saw a white man coming over the rise and—feared for him. . . . . That is all. I thought you knew."

She stopped, and looked at Young Sandy with a sweet shyness.

The two older men looked first at each other, then at the young couple. Without a word more Big Sandy slipped his hand under Oom Piet's elbow and led him out of the room.

"They'll settle it between them," he said, when he had closed the door.

THE END

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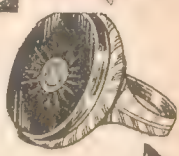

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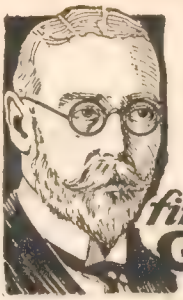

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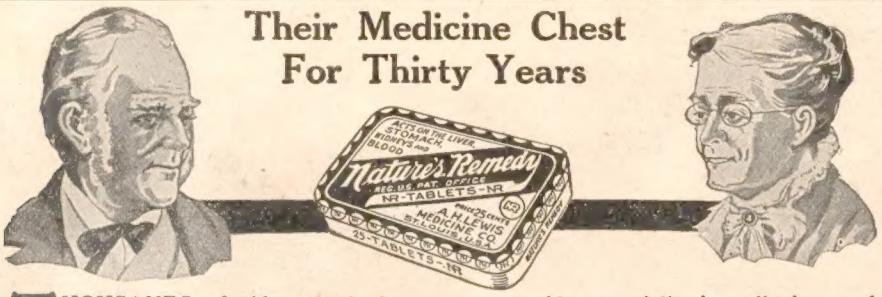

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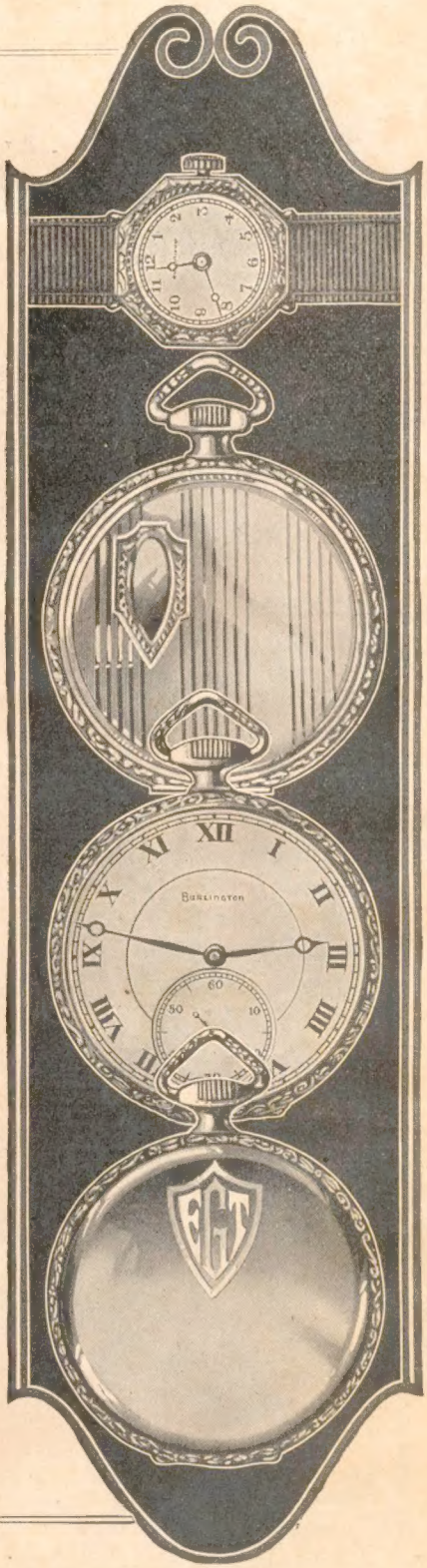

Teeth You Envy

Are brushed in this new way

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You see the results in every circle. Teeth once dingy now glisten as they should. Teeth once concealed now show in smiles.

This is to offer a ten-day test to prove the benefits to you.

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Film is what discolors—not the teeth. Tartar is based on film. Film holds food substance which ferments and forms acid. It holds the acid in contact with the teeth to cause decay.

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Brings this

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Seamless

Brussels Rug

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